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Professor Carolyn Griswold
Professor Peter Wosh

AFRICAN AMERICANS AT MONTCLAIR STATE TEACHERS COLLEGE
1927 TO 1957: AN ORAL HISTORY ANALYSIS

Lise Greene

Program in Higher Education Administration
Department of Administration, Leadership, and Technology

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the
School of Education
New York University
2000

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To my mother, Ina Schmidt Greene,
who was my dearest friend,
and to my father, Karl Hillman Greene,
who, along with her, believed
I could accomplish anything.

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Shortly after Dr. Irvin D. Reid became president of Montclair State University, he informed the executive assistant whom he inherited that she would be fired if she failed to earn a Doctor of Philosophy degree. Thus began the long journey and thus my first acknowledgment is to you, Irv, with gratitude and affection.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

Teaching was a traditional career choice for college-educated African Americans in the early twentieth century (Cole 326). But today there is a serious shortage of black teachers that is predicted to worsen considerably into the twenty-first century (AACTE 1990b, Anglin et al., Cole, ETS, Gomez, Kailin, Knopp and Otuya, Rancifer, Waters). The problem of the current lack of black teachers has roots extending back into educational history. What happened?

Acknowledging that the events of half a century ago are unlikely to provide a *direct* explanation for a contemporary condition, oral history was used in this study to explore the experiences of African American students at one institution, Montclair State Teachers College, during the period 1927 through 1957. No one had ever asked them about their experiences, which lay in their thoughts and hearts like a treasure waiting to be discovered—a treasure that might constitute a puzzle piece, creating one more link from the past to the present. Additional pieces would have to be discovered by other researchers to form a complete picture. But these voices needed to be heard now, while they were still able to speak.

In the 1930 population of black professionals in the United States, one of every eight males and three of every four females were teachers (Carter 58). Horace Mann Bond, a prominent black educator, wrote in 1934 that white college graduates had numerous career choices, “while the Negro college and normal-school graduate is

restricted to a few narrow lines of endeavor most promising of which is the teaching profession” (271).

During the 1930s, African American women were encouraged by the National Association of College Women (an organization of black female college graduates) to pursue other employment opportunities that were widening for women of all races, including social work, civil service, and business (Perkins 360). Nevertheless, in 1950, almost half of black professionals were still teachers, compared with less than a quarter of white professionals (Carter 50). As indicated in a special *Life Magazine* article on October 16, 1950:

The teachers colleges and the public schools cannot compete with business, law, medicine or any of a thousand occupations for top faculty members or students. . . . [However,] because Negroes still have fewer business opportunities than white people, they are sending many of their highest caliber people into teaching. (Sperry 152)

The desirability of teaching as a career choice for African Americans began to deteriorate following the Supreme Court’s unanimous 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* that outlawed segregated public schools. Many black teachers had held positions in all-black schools, including in New Jersey. After integration, African American teachers in the North “were hired on a token basis, and in small cities and rural areas, blacks were informed that they would not be appointed” (Perkins 362). Those already teaching “were demoted and dispersed through white schools, where they became ‘invisible’ and bereft of authority” (Shaw 347).

From the 1950s to the present, other opportunities have continued to expand for African Americans as well as for white women. But in 1982, Alexander Astin found that

education remained a popular career choice among blacks at all degree levels.¹ His research showed that when African Americans majored in education, the dropout rate was small compared with other disciplines and students tended to perform well academically (60, 111). Nevertheless, job opportunities in diverse disciplines are considerably more lucrative than teaching and draw many students into different professions. And, in addition to their desire for financial remuneration, today's black college students do not feel compelled to base career choices on the betterment of community or race (Perkins 362-363), which was a strong motivator in the past.

Two other related factors have played a role in the shortage of African American teachers. The combination of poorly prepared prospective black teachers who cannot pass certification tests and the fact that those tests may not even be valid has eliminated many African Americans from teaching careers. In its 1932 report, the Interracial Committee of the New Jersey Conference of Social Work attributed much of the apparent intellectual difference between black and white children to difference in environment and education (38). The following year, noted educator E. S. Evenden deplored the poor quality of the education of blacks and of black teachers, which resulted in an educationally underprivileged group (Caliver vii). Because unequal opportunities persisted to some extent throughout the twentieth century, such deprivation was unlikely to prepare students to do well on a standardized teacher certification test. The assault on the validity of certification tests—including their cultural biases—has continued through the present time (AACTE 1990a, Bond, Cole, Page and Page, Perkins, Rancifer).

¹ The American Council on Education reported that the largest percentage of research doctorates awarded to US minorities in AY97 was in education, a discipline dominated by African Americans (*Higher Education and National Affairs*, 7/26/99 2).

Another consideration in the small presence of African American students in teacher education programs is the fact that nearly half of today's black American students are enrolled in community colleges (Anglin 1). Although a majority of community college students intend to transfer to senior institutions, less than 20% actually do so and less than a third of those who transfer actually graduate (9). Additionally, rarely do community college students express interest in teaching when they begin their studies. Junior colleges (since the 1970s) have tended to emphasize vocational rather than prebaccalaureate preparation, thus depriving students who ultimately do decide to become teachers of the required preliminary education (9, 2). Therefore, the transfer path from community colleges to teacher education programs has been effectively blocked (2).

Despite the increased freedom that blacks now have to pursue other fields, this is a period in history when black teachers are desperately needed. Blacks are far from obtaining educational equity and, ironically, the gains that they applauded in the 1960s and 1970s are slowly eroding. Many urban schools are basically segregated. (Perkins 363)

The consequence for students of single-race teachers is unfortunate. A number of researchers have addressed the value of diversity within the teaching force for academic and social reasons that affect all students. These include student awareness of the reality of our pluralistic society, eradication of stereotypes, modeling of people of different races working together, and role modeling for minority children (Cole, Gomez, Goodlad 1990, 1994, J. Gordon 1994, King 1993a,b, Perkins, Shaw, Stewart et al., Thomas).

[Black students] desperately need Black role models for development of self-esteem and identity. . . . Majority [race] students need the presence of Black teachers and administrators in order to learn to respect Blacks in roles of authority and to see them as examples of competent professionals. (Cole 334)

Research has documented that academic performance is affected by teacher expectations; that white teachers' expectations for black students are lower than those for

white students; and that teachers of color, who are more likely to come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, are often more sensitive to and effective with students from similar backgrounds (Haberman, Payne, Stewart et al., Waters). In 1911, W. E. B. DuBois observed that although black students in the North “usually have the same facilities for schooling as other children have, they often lack encouragement and inspiration” from white teachers (quoted in Perkins 364).

In a damning personal account of the experiences of black pupils with white teachers in Harlem, it was alleged by playwright Loften Mitchell:

Sadism was—in the 1920’s and 1930’s—a pre-requisite for teaching in the public schools. Incompetent, inept [white] teachers sought “butts” for bad jokes. Knowledge-hungry black children were excellent targets. These teachers knew nothing and cared little about Negroes and wondered why they had to put up with them. Since neither teacher nor pupil had been exposed to Negro history, the black child sat in class, unwanted, barely tolerated. (77)

A black teacher who began work in 1928 in a junior high school where all the students and faculty were black reported that in 1940 the faculty began to be integrated. But she thought the teaching was better before the white faculty arrived. “The black teachers cared about the pupils . . . [who] would come back to school to talk to their former teachers” (Devore 176-177). Various black educators and parents through the years have promoted segregated schools—to protect children from negative experiences, to provide additional teaching opportunities for African Americans, and to aid in “race development.”² For example, right next door to New Jersey, the Pennsylvania Association of Teachers of Colored Children advocated in a 1925 resolution for the

² Florence, a subject in this study who graduated from the Montclair State Normal School in 1928, asserted: “There’s nothing like being with your own people, learning their ways.” When she visited an older sister who was teaching art in a Washington, DC high school, “that was the most spectacular thing I have ever seen—a large building with about 14 or 15 hundred students—black. Everybody black—staff black—everybody black. And the children had advantages because they went out for offices, like Student Council.”

continuation of segregated public schools. Many black children attended mixed schools throughout the state, but few graduated due to problems with prejudiced teachers, administrators, and students (V. Franklin 71, 77).

A parallel might be drawn with the advantages versus disadvantages of single-sex education. In all-female schools, girls have increased opportunities for leadership positions and do not face the intimidation or sense of inferiority due solely to their gender that they often find in mixed schools. Boys in coeducational schools generally have received more encouragement and have been expected to achieve more. On the other hand, “men are always vicariously present for girls, just as whites are for American Negroes, even if they are physically missing” (Jencks and Riesman 307). And students must eventually learn to navigate in the dangerous ocean of life, not just in the safe local pond.

The writers of a 1932 New Jersey report observed that “the apparent inconsistencies of accepting segregated facilities on the one hand, and deploring them on the other, has not contributed to an understanding of the whole problem by either the whites or the Negroes” (Interracial Committee 65-66). Although there were reasons for African Americans to desire segregated facilities, in 1934 Bond expressed the more prevalent view, based on social psychology, that early contact with members of diverse racial groups fosters interracial amiability better than total separation up to adulthood (385).

A recent study reveals a dark side of at least one all-black school in the 1990s. Jean Anyon’s months-long observation at a school in a poor Newark neighborhood showed constant abuse of black children by black teachers, many of whom had been pupils in the same school. While outside the scope of the present study, it is worth stating that she acknowledges (but ultimately disagrees with) the possibility raised by

another researcher that “a cultural norm of harsh discipline exists among African-Americans, and thus verbal expressions that a white observer might perceive as abusive are not so perceived by African-American teachers or students” (81). Although a challenge has been issued to the common assumption of a strong negative impact on academic achievement from low socioeconomic status in itself (White et al.), Anyon’s conclusions about the reasons for these behaviors relate in part to race *and class* exploitation suffered by the teachers when they were pupils—which reinforces the need to go back in history and learn what happened.

Because the experiences of one generation result in patterns of thought and behavior that influence the next generation—whether consciously or not—it is important to understand the events and social expectations in the lives of former African American college students. Therefore, the present study involves the experiences of African Americans at Montclair State Teachers College from 1927 through 1957. Their stories serve as an illustration of what might have been the experiences of black students in teacher education programs throughout northern New Jersey, a region with a high minority population.

The period under study encompasses the institution’s three decades as a teachers college—the years between its designation as a normal school and a college. As will be shown, Montclair State is both *representative* of normal schools that became teachers colleges and then comprehensive institutions and *singular* in its high standards and student success during the period under review. Similar to the approach taken by Lizabeth Cohen, who chose to study industrial workers over a two-decade period through the narrow setting of a single city (Chicago), I found it practical and reasonable to limit investigation to the setting of a single college. Her book described how workers in one American city made sense of a particular era in recent history and what certain changes

meant for them. In this study, a similar strategy was used with students at one New Jersey teachers college making sense of their experiences. A full discussion of oral history as a research method for uncovering the past follows in Chapter IV, “Method.”

Purpose of the Researcher

Henry Simmons wrote that society

is too concerned with group problems of the urban and rural ghettos to take the time to look at the Black man as an individual. When it does, it tends to call upon the works of the whites for “expert” advice instead of going to the best source—the Black man who has lived the event. (7)

A major goal of this study was to discover, by interviewing the black teacher aspirants who lived the event, how their experiences at Montclair State Teachers College from 1927 through 1957 affected their completion of the program and their subsequent career choices. Their recollections provided insights that were not available in official institutional materials.

Wynetta Devore’s dissertation at Rutgers University was an oral history of the education of blacks in New Jersey from 1900 to 1930. She concluded with the recommendation that the experiences of black students in New Jersey normal schools be examined more closely. Although only one of my interviewees was a graduate of the Montclair State Normal School, full interviews were conducted with 23 additional black students from the teachers college. Informal interviews also were held with family members of several deceased black graduates of both the normal school and the teachers college. This is the only study ever undertaken of the preparedness and satisfaction of African American students at Montclair State Teachers College.

Research Questions

To establish a framework for understanding the journey of African Americans en route to a teaching career, the following questions were addressed through interviews and examination of written documents:

- How did their cultural and economic backgrounds influence their decision to become a teacher?
- What was life like for African American students in a teacher education program on a predominantly white campus?
 - Why did some persist and others did not?
 - What impact did social, political, economic, and historical forces (such as racism, classism, the Depression and World War II) have on their aspirations?
- What substantive changes occurred during their college years, and how did those changes affect their individual lives?
- How did the experiences of African Americans as a group change during the course of three decades?
- What were their career choices and experiences after college?

The extent to which the integration of African American students into the campus community affected their participation in the teacher education program was explored in large part through the words of the respondents themselves, supplemented by written materials that are described later.

Definitions

African Americans (or *blacks*, *Negroes*, *colored*, *people of color*) were self-designated as participants in this study. When quoting, the terms employed by the

subjects or other sources are used. Otherwise, “African American” or “black” are used interchangeably in accordance with current preference.

Community is a social concept that, for purposes of this study, means a student’s sense of belonging to the social and/or academic spheres of the college as demonstrated through personal statement and documented involvement in campus activities. A sense of community does not exclude the possibility of dissonance or disagreement within the group. A more comprehensive definition is included in Chapter III, “Conceptual Framework.”

Integration is used in two ways that are clear in context. One is the unification of groups or facilities, such as schools, that were previously segregated by race. The other usage is nonracial; it involves the sharing of values with others in a group (intellectual integration) and personal affiliations (social integration).

Normal schools are professional schools that initially were established solely to prepare elementary and/or secondary school teachers. Most such institutions that survived became teachers colleges and then comprehensive colleges and universities.

Oral history is “primary source material obtained by recording the spoken words—generally by means of planned, tape-recorded interviews—of persons deemed to harbor hitherto unavailable information worth preserving” (Starr 4). Another definition of oral history is “the recollections of a single individual who participated in or was an observer of the events to which s/he testifies” (Okihiro 200). A full discussion of oral history is presented in Chapter IV, “Method.”

Racism is the determination of actions, attitudes, or policies by beliefs about racial characteristics (*Dictionary of Sociology*). A more complete definition is provided in Chapter III, “Conceptual Framework.”

Delimitations and Limitations

The delimitations of this study are its focus on one educational institution; on one specific time period; and on the perceptions of primarily one group of people.

Limitations include the possibilities that findings may not be generalizable to other populations or teacher education programs and may be subject to other interpretations; that memory may not be a reflection of reality; and that people who could not be interviewed may have given entirely different views of the Montclair experience. It should be borne in mind that the intent of a qualitative researcher is “not to generalize findings, but to form a unique interpretation of events” (Creswell 158-159). Nevertheless, limited generalizability is anticipated through the application to other institutions of themes that may arise in this study.

Conclusion

This first chapter has established the value of preserving the hitherto-unexplored experiences of a group of students at Montclair State Teachers College during the period 1927 through 1957. It has described the purpose and guidelines for the study as well as the questions to be addressed. Understanding the past lives of African American teacher education students is important for documenting a portion of American history, which has value in and of itself. A side benefit may be that the threads forming the patterns of their lives are traceable through the present and future to enlighten other researchers or to shed light on issues that have not yet surfaced. Because bits and pieces of seemingly unconnected information often have provided—years later—the missing parts of a knowledge puzzle, retaining such documentation has historical and sociological value.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

The first chapter described the intent in the present study to explore the experiences of a small group of African American students on one campus. To provide a context for their experiences, this chapter depicts the development of Montclair State in relation to internal decisions and external events.

The following table shows the percentage of the black population of the United States, New Jersey, Essex County (in which Montclair is located), and the town of Montclair in the census years 1920 through 1960, which encompass the period of this study:

Year	USA	New Jersey	Essex County	Montclair
1920	9.9	3.7	4.4	12.0
1930	9.7	5.2	7.2	15.2
1940	9.8	5.5	8.2	17.0
1950	10.0	6.6	11.5	20.6
1960	10.5	8.5	19.8	23.9
% increase	6.1	129.7	350.0	99.2

The percentage of African Americans in the population of the United States from 1920 to 1960 remained fairly constant, increasing only 6.1%. Although the percentage in New Jersey was always lower than that for the country, the rate of increase was much higher (129.7%). The black population in Essex County increased 350.0% and the rate of increase was consistently higher than that in the state as a whole. The percentage in Montclair was considerably higher than that in the county, state, or nation in any given

census year, although the rate of increase from 1920 to 1960 (99.2%) was less than for the county or the state.

In the three census years of 1920, 1930, and 1940, Essex—one of 21 counties in New Jersey—constituted approximately 20% of the state population. In 1950 and 1960, it decreased to about 15%, but was still densely populated and a plentiful source of potential students for Montclair State Teachers College. In its normal school years, Montclair drew largely from the local area while Trenton State drew more widely from throughout New Jersey (Shannon 272). The difference is likely attributable in part to the high availability of students within a short radius of Montclair. A fixed interval sampling of MSTC graduates in every fifth year of this study, beginning with 1930, shows the percentage of students from the town of Montclair itself decreasing from a high of 11% in 1930 to a low of 3% in 1955.

Early New Jersey and Town of Montclair

New Jersey's early history of racial inequality has been considered contemptible by some historians. Neither religious leaders nor newspaper editors championed the abolitionist cause (Gillette 5), and it was the last state north of the Mason-Dixon line to abolish slavery. Even then, as in some other northern states including New York, emancipation was not immediate and complete. The 1804 "Act for the Gradual Emancipation of Slavery" provided that *children* born of slaves after July 4, 1804 would be free, but the final death blow to all slavery in New Jersey did not occur until the adoption of the thirteenth amendment to the United States Constitution in 1865 (Price 1980 80, Williams-Myers 8).

The underground railroad transported relatively few runaway slaves through the state, although Harriet Tubman and John Mason assisted about 2,100 slaves toward

freedom from their base of operations in the town of Greenwich (J. Gordon 4). In 1860, the highest proportion of blacks in any free state lived in New Jersey, but they were treated as second-class citizens and had no suffrage (Gillette 6). That same year, New Jersey was the only northern state that did not award every electoral vote to Abraham Lincoln in the presidential election, and it has been alleged that the state developed into a stronghold of support for southern secessionists. Lincoln lost New Jersey again in 1864—the only free northern state he did not carry (Gillette 3, G. Wright 28). In 1865, 1866, and 1870 New Jersey rejected the thirteenth, fourteenth, and fifteenth constitutional amendments which dealt, respectively, with the abolition of slavery, the guarantee of citizenship rights to everyone born in the United States, and the extension of voting rights to all races (G. Wright 29).

An alternate view is that New Jerseyans were not defenders of slavery but defenders of the constitutional rights of states (Gillette 5), and that they were not opposed to emancipation but favored a gradual rather than immediate process so as not to throw the economy into chaos. Although Lincoln did not win all of New Jersey's electoral votes in 1860, they were shared mainly with another northern candidate, not with the slave-state candidate. When black suffrage was granted, New Jerseyans did not obstruct the process. Lynchings were exceedingly rare, unlike in the border states with which New Jersey has been compared by some historians. Gillette countered the conservative label applied to New Jersey by noting its citizens' active involvement in various reform movements, such as the founding of a penitentiary, public schools, and a state teachers college (7-8, 16).

However, the effects of these institutions were not necessarily felt equally by all residents of the state. For example, an 1881 law was enacted to abolish forced school segregation and, in the northern counties, most separate schools were discontinued. But

local school officials could and did *offer* segregated facilities in the lower grades and many black communities in south Jersey accepted them voluntarily (G. Wright 51-52).

Even though the physical facilities and quality of education were inferior, separate schools afforded teaching and administrative opportunities to black professionals and “spared black pupils the racial indignities often encountered in integrated classrooms”

(52). A man who had been educated in such a school described it thus:

It was relaxed; you could express yourself without thinking you will offend the white man, or the white man calling you down. They taught you that you were somebody regardless whether you were Black or white. That’s when I really realized the Negro could think and do just the same as the white fella. That’s what they imbedded in us. (Devore 204)

The black population of New Jersey increased significantly during the twentieth century. Initially, many people who migrated from southern states settled in the rural southern counties of New Jersey. The mass migration created social as well as educational problems, of which the most important was the adjustment of African American children to the school curriculum in the North (Frazier 440). By 1910, the migrants also began to arrive in the towns and cities of the state’s northern counties. Newark increased its black population tremendously by offering traditional work opportunities for laborers, deliverymen, janitors, teamsters, laundresses, and maids (G. Wright 45).

Recognition of the reality of job openings had been formalized through the Manual Training and Industrial School for Colored Youth, a vocational training center and boarding school for African Americans in elementary through high school located in Bordentown (Devore 193-194, M. Wright 178-180). It was established by black leaders as a private school in 1886 and taken over by the state in 1900. Male graduates found employment in agriculture, auto mechanics, woodworking, general mechanics, and printing; women worked in domestic science, beauty culture, and dressmaking

(Interracial Committee 40). Thus, the black graduates met the need for low-level workers within the state.

Black soldiers served their country during World War I (1914 to 1918). Racial tensions escalated, particularly in the South, when white terrorist groups increased their attacks on black citizens whose family and friends were fighting “to make the world safe for democracy” (Anderson 260). During the war, New Jersey remained attractive to southern blacks who found work in its industrial plants, especially in the metropolises of Newark, Paterson, Jersey City, and Trenton (Scott 56-57, G. Wright 69). These communities all had state or city normal schools in which black teachers could be trained. African American newcomers continued to arrive in New Jersey following the war, and in the 1920s hailed mostly from the southern states of Virginia, Georgia, and the Carolinas (Interracial Committee 20). In 1920, a male physician originally from West Virginia became the first African American in the New Jersey legislature; the first black female legislator would not be elected until 1957 (Smith 137).³

The town of Montclair was a popular destination for southern black migrants due to the demand for domestic help (G. Wright 45). Montclair, incorporated in 1868, is located in Essex County in the northeast metropolitan area of New Jersey, only 14 miles west of New York City and approximately half that distance from Newark. The town has been racially diverse almost from the beginning. Although the first US census of Montclair in 1870 included only 36 black citizens (1.3%) in a population of 2,853, the numbers climbed rapidly beginning in that year as “the result of an effort to solve the servant question” (Whittemore 105). Black servants from Virginia proved so satisfactory

³ Walter Gilbert Alexander was the first black male legislator; Madaline A. Williams was the first black female legislator.

for one prominent family that many others soon followed. They were industrious and—according to a 1952 publication by the Townswomen, a group of African American women in Montclair—were treated very benevolently by their employers, many of whom provided down payments and mortgage funds for their servants' homes. In the 24-year period from 1870 to 1894, the black population increased by well over 4,000%.

One such servant was William Grigsby. In a short biography of his life, his daughter stated that Grigsby arrived from Virginia in 1890 to work as a landscaper and furnace man. He went to school at night and earned a law degree from New York University in 1902 as well as a real estate license. While continuing his work as a servant, he sold real estate in his free time. He saved enough to marry, purchase a home, build a three-story public recreation center, and send all five of his children to college (two of his daughters being the first African Americans from Montclair to attend Smith). He served as Sunday School superintendent and trustee in one of the black churches for more than 20 years, first president of the church's literary society, charter member of the black YMCA, publisher of a small militant newspaper, and member of many town organizations (Mayo).

The educational attainment of the town's black population may be illustrated through illiteracy rates as established by the census. In 1920, illiteracy for African Americans was 6.1% in New Jersey, 4.0% in Essex County, and only 1.7% in Montclair. The figures for 1930 (the last year in which the question was addressed) were 5.1% in the state, 4.7% in the county, and only 2.2% in Montclair. From the time of its inception, the town supported at various times four black newspapers (including William Grigsby's), although none apparently lasted more than four years.

The town of Montclair has always been economically as well as racially diverse, with the servants at one end of the spectrum and their prosperous employers at the other.

A property inventory conducted by the State Housing Authority in 1934 revealed that Montclair was “one of the wealthiest per-capita municipalities in the United States . . . noted for its beautiful scenery and homes and . . . many important educational institutions. The State Teachers College [is] located here” (1). One of the college’s presidents told about driving off campus to attend a formal event with another president and getting a flat tire. He removed his tuxedo jacket and started to change the tire, prompting his companion to object: “You are not going to change that tire with your tux on!” He responded, “I would not think of changing a tire in Upper Montclair unless I had my tux on” (Partridge 1981 4).

Although teaching was not a lucrative profession for anyone, teachers’ salaries in the town of Montclair were substantially higher than the average (Board of Education 1944 41). In fact, in 1939 the median salary for a Montclair High School teacher was \$3,614, whereas the median salary for a professor at Montclair State Teachers College was only \$3,166 (Morrison 11). However, housing was so expensive in Montclair that many school staff members—most of whom were white—had to live in neighboring towns with lower rentals (Board of Education 1957 4). Throughout the years of this study, teachers nationwide were underpaid in relation to their education and New Jersey was among the worst states in this regard, the relative generosity of the town of Montclair notwithstanding. A 1946 survey revealed the following comparisons between national averages and New Jersey in per capita income, per capita expenditure for higher education, percentage of students who attended colleges outside their own state, and number of campus buildings at similar teachers colleges (*Montclarion* 12/17/46):

	Income Per Capita	H.Ed. Per Capita	% Out of State	# Buildings
USA	\$480	\$3.29	5.6 to 64.2	17
NJ	\$587 (6th highest)	\$.65 (lowest)	59.5 (2nd highest)	5 (MSTC)

Although it had the sixth highest per capita income in the nation, New Jersey spent the lowest amount per capita on higher education, had the second highest out-migration rate for college students (the highest was Delaware), and gave Montclair State Teachers College less than one-third the national average of buildings for such institutions.⁴

The town of Montclair was commended in the state's 1932 Interracial Committee report for being one of nine New Jersey communities having both a YMCA (established 1905) and a YWCA (established 1912) for black youth, and one of only three among that group whose recreational facilities were adequate. The black YMCA was built largely through contributions from local citizens, with 15.2% provided by the Julius Rosenwald Fund, and the black YWCA is purported to be the only one in the United States founded by women of color.⁵ The Ys, although segregated, were important in many black communities where wholesome recreation was not otherwise available. In Montclair, interracial public recreation activities were provided, but there was some segregation in private recreation facilities at least through the 1940s (Montclair Intergroup Council). Montclair also was commended for supporting an especially active black Boy Scout troop; for being one of only eight communities accepting both white and black children in its day nurseries; and for having a particularly good library collection "on the subject of

⁴ Sammartino made the argument that because the Department of Health, Education and Welfare based its statistics on the amount spent on higher education per person in the state as a whole, New Jersey was disadvantaged since so many of its students go to college in other states—thus artificially lowering the figure. In his view, a more fair approach would be to report the dollars spent per person *in public institutions*, which would increase the per capita figure for New Jersey. Regarding the high outmigration rate, Sammartino cited the natural inclination of students to go away to college and the accessibility of institutions in New York and Pennsylvania from a state as small as New Jersey (21-23).

⁵ Astronaut and Montclair resident Buzz Aldrin was the honorary chair of the second building campaign for the black YWCA, and took the organization's pin on his flight to the moon (*Montclair Times* 10/9/97 A-16).

the Negro” (J. Franklin 1988 290, Interracial Committee 49, 51, 56).⁶ However, into the late 1940s there remained some inequity—for example, in the town’s eating places (Montclair Intergroup Council).

The Montclair schools were excellent. In 1933, the governor’s School Survey Commission cited Montclair and Atlantic City as examples of districts that spent the most per pupil on public education. The schools in Montclair were racially mixed, although a system discreetly called “optional areas” allowed segregation among the 11 elementary schools. Children living in optional areas—apparently those with high black populations—could choose to attend a school outside their own neighborhood. As a result, wealthier white parents who could afford the transportation enrolled their children in the more distant, less black schools, leaving some schools with a basically black population.

In 1947, the total town school enrollment was approximately 25% African American, with black children constituting from 0% to 85.4% in the 11 elementary schools. There were no optional areas for the four junior highs or the one high school (Montclair Intergroup Council 1-5). As is so often the case, parents may have expressed concern or fear in their choice of school enrollment, but the children themselves evidently had few problems. Years after the notorious behavior of many white students in 1956 at Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas, one of them admitted taunting the nine black students who attempted to integrate the school. But she blamed the parents for their children’s behavior: “I honestly believe that had the parents stayed away, there

⁶ Interestingly, four of the six libraries receiving such special acclaim were located in towns that had state normal schools or teachers colleges.

wouldn't have been a problem. The whole thing was [at] their insistence" (Jennings 353).

A 1937 publication of the town Board of Education titled "Yesterday and Today in Montclair Schools" quoted the acting superintendent of schools on the method for appointing teachers:

The teachers have been selected on one basis only, and that is, "Who is the person best fitted to fill the job which is open at the particular time?" . . . Consideration of the merit of the applicant is the only valid criterion which can be consistently applied. (11)

In a 1944 report on teacher salaries, the Board of Education observed that the citizens of Montclair were in the main well educated and consequently more critical and demanding of the town's teachers, who were expected to be "well educated, suitably dressed and well housed" (72). The town was willing to pay relatively well for the best teachers, but for many years its generosity stopped at the color line despite the Board of Education's assertion in 1937. Although there were African American substitute teachers and adult education instructors, not until 1946 was the first black teacher appointed to a permanent position.⁷ Mabel Mitchell Frazier Hudson, a graduate of the Newark Normal School, was assigned to an elementary class at Glenfield School, which was 85% black at that time.⁸ It would be another decade before the first African American teacher, Jeanne Wade Heningburg, joined the faculty at Montclair High School.⁹

⁷ 1946 was also the year in which, at Montclair State Teachers College, the first African American pupil was admitted to College High School and the first black student moved into the Russ Hall dormitory.

⁸ See Montclair NAACP "Historical Highlights." Florence, a subject of this study, noted with regard to Mabel Hudson: "I used to say to myself, 'You don't have to tell me she's excellent. She wouldn't have the job unless she was better than anybody else.' That's the way it went. That was my feeling. You couldn't take that away from me. When you looked around, you saw what was going on." She added that the next black teacher hired by the Montclair schools was Willie C. Davis; she was assigned to an elementary class at George Washington School in 1947.

⁹ See MSU administrative newspaper, *Insight*, 5/6/96 4.

William Valentine, the first black male graduate of Montclair High School (in 1898), went on to become the principal of the Manual Training and Industrial School for Colored Youth in Bordentown, and many other African American students excelled and achieved throughout the years. Minority students participated in all school activities. In the 1940s, they served as class officers, club members, and cheerleaders. They took part in sports, the band, the flag guard, plays, and dances (Montclair Intergroup Council 1-11). There was also a credit-bearing Negro Spiritual Choir. In 1957, the town Board of Education issued a report titled “Montclair: A Teacher’s Town” that included the following observation by the 1953 Middle States accreditation team:

In spite of the considerable diversity of socio-economic levels and other sub-groups represented in the pupil body of [Montclair High School], . . . the visitors in the school could not easily identify any cliques or divisions among the pupils based upon racial, religious or socio-economic differences. (6)¹⁰

A local branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People had been established in Montclair in 1916, only six years after the national group was organized. The first treasurer was Albert Terry, a custodian at the Montclair State Normal School; one of the longest-serving presidents (with three separate terms) was Octavia Warren Catlett, MSNS class of 1922. The NAACP was instrumental in pressing the town toward significant racial progress, including the hiring of permanent black teachers; integration in local theatres, restaurants and the skating rink; reversal of a plan to segregate black graduates at the end of the line in commencement exercises at

¹⁰ Ethel M, a subject in this study, graduated from Montclair High School in 1944. She confirmed the blatant existence of “economic class divides. . . . It was such a rigid difference, but within the classroom it really didn’t seem so apparent.” Fifty-five years later, in September 1999, *Seventeen* magazine featured the 10 best American cities for teenagers. Among them was Montclair. A male high school student was quoted: “They say variety is better, and that’s true here. There are all kinds of people here, and that’s a big reason Montclair is so special.” The article described the school’s racial composition (53% black, 39% white) and noted that teachers hold workshops on breaking down race barriers. A female student was quoted: “Everyone’s just raised into this way of thinking [about racial diversity], and we all get along fine.” The article concluded by mentioning that Montclair State University is located in the town.

Montclair High School; appointment of black police officers; protection of black tenants from excessive rents; adequate playground equipment; removal of offensive texts from school libraries; appointment of African Americans to the Board of Education; and regular staff assignments in place of “courtesy privileges” for black physicians at local hospitals.¹¹ Many of these issues had or would have an impact on current or future students at Montclair State Teachers College, as will be described later.

Beginning with the 1950s, the town of Montclair attracted more black professionals, entertainers, artists, business people, executives, sports figures, and politicians who raised the average financial standing among black families. Nevertheless, the 1960 census showed the median income for black males in Montclair was only 69.6% of that earned by all males (\$3,813 versus \$5,480). The first black mayor of Montclair was not elected until 1968. And the first African American president of Montclair State College, who lived in town from 1973 through 1984, commented that professional blacks in Montclair generally did not mingle with black domestic workers.

Judging by the amount and content of coverage in the *Montclair Times*, town/gown relations were very good (*MT* 4/8/31, 7/22/48, 7/23/52). The newspaper reported on the work, national reputations, consulting, and publications of faculty members at the teachers college. It announced conferences and other campus events. MSTC’s facilities and educational materials were available to local organizations, many of which took “an active interest in the college by meeting there and making tours of inspection.” During the 1940s, facilities were shared for war-related activities. The mayor publicly endorsed a major college fundraising project. A number of faculty members were Montclair residents who participated in the life of the town and whose

¹¹ One of the two physicians with courtesy privileges was Arthur Thornhill, father of an interviewee.

children attended local schools. And, of course, students patronized nearby establishments and some of them used town schools for observation and practice teaching.

Chapin: Montclair State in the Beginning (1908 to 1924)

The new normal school in Montclair was headed by its first principal for 16 years. This section describes the school's founding, faculty and student demographics, enrollment growth, and quality during that first period of its history, which included World War I.

Upper Montclair, the site of the normal school/teachers college, is in the northern section of the town. The state Board of Education was attracted by the location: "nearly in the centre of a population of over two million and though it is somewhat removed from the commercial centres of population yet it is within a few miles of our Nation's greatest sources of inspiration and culture" (*Catalog* 1928-29 18). The institution was founded in 1908 as New Jersey's second two-year state normal school for the training of elementary grade teachers. An early graduate (Grace Layer Shorter '16) recalled that students "were learning the technique of teaching the material which later we would be presenting to our pupils. We were not trying to increase our knowledge of some particular thing, but striving to become good teachers" (memoir written in August 1997). Nevertheless, they were expected to have full command of their material. "You must know your subject; no amount of pedagogy will enable you to teach what you do not know" (*Palatine* 1922 11).

The principal was Charles Sumner Chapin, 48 years old and former head of the Rhode Island State Normal School. Chapin was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Wesleyan University, receiving both a BA and an MA. He was a member of the Massachusetts Bar, although there is no evidence that he actually practiced law. He held various

positions in education—high school teacher, assistant in the English Department at Wesleyan, assistant superintendent of a public school system, high school principal, lecturer at the Yale University summer school—before becoming principal of the second oldest American state normal school in Westfield, Massachusetts and then going on to head the Rhode Island State Normal School (*Catalog* 1909 3).

In a 1907 article for the journal *Education*, Chapin wrote that in teaching, “the one thing that is both impossible and undesirable is uniformity. So far as we have yet discovered, there is no one and only best way of organizing schools, or of teaching any subject” (Chapin 506-507). Although he would institute copious rules for students at the new normal school in Montclair, in accordance with the practice of that period, his professed stance against uniformity seemed to have formed the foundation for an individualistic streak that would be carried on by his successors throughout the college’s history.

In 1908, just before leaving Rhode Island for New Jersey, Chapin was awarded an honorary doctor of science degree from Brown University and was subsequently addressed as “Dr.” (whereas the only one of his original nine faculty members in possession of an earned doctorate was a woman who used the title “Miss”).¹² His salary at Montclair was \$5,000 a year—about double that of many other normal school principals—and his duties included serving as secretary, treasurer, bookkeeper, business manager, and teacher (Pettegrove 1983 10-11, quoting 12/3/07 minutes of state Board of Education). He also received \$1,000 for rent and \$500 to serve as a member of the state committee for teacher certification and accreditation of New Jersey high schools (McGee

¹² She was Cornelia E. MacMullan, PhD, head of the English Department.

11). The only other member of the committee was James M. Green, principal of the Trenton State Normal School.

On the personal side, four graduates of the Montclair State Normal School remembered Principal Chapin as a nice-looking, delightful person who was a “very fine gentleman” and “friendly to students in the hallways.” He presided over the assemblies, “spoke beautifully and was very helpful,” although students did not see him often or have much personal contact with him.¹³ His sense of humor is revealed in a 1922 yearbook quote of a Chapin phrase describing how students completed their projects and tests: “with tears, hysterics and screams” (21). He presided over a campus consisting of one building on 25 acres. At the school’s dedication in the fall of 1908, he proclaimed: “We have been handed a schoolhouse to make a school. . . . Before our first class graduates, this building will be crowded” (*MT* 10/3/08). They were prescient words.

The state’s original normal school had been opened in 1855 in Trenton, 16 years after Massachusetts established the first such public institution in Lexington.¹⁴ Trenton was the ninth state normal school in the nation (Harper 62). In his first annual report in 1856, the principal of the Trenton State Normal School recommended a four-year rather than two-year program for elementary teachers (Jarrold 78-79). It would take three-quarters of a century to implement the suggestion. However, in 1907, Trenton Normal did add to its two-year elementary curriculum a four-year *high school* teacher training course.

In 1908, the National Education Association adopted a policy statement including the advice “that normal schools prepare teachers for the entire public service—

¹³ All recollections are taken from my conversations with white alumnae Grace Layer Shorter ’16, Anne Rutledge Hennie ’20, Grace Flitcroft Quinn ’22, and Wilma Lindlof Schulz ’24.

¹⁴ A private normal school had been founded in 1823 in Vermont.

elementary and secondary” (Harper 138-139). Although such a program had just been started at Trenton, New Jersey lagged educationally by establishing its second normal school at Montclair, that very same year, for elementary teachers only. And in 1917, Trenton’s program for secondary teachers was discontinued by the state Board of Education. Principal Chapin suggested that the Board change the Montclair State Normal School into a teachers college with a four-year curriculum for the preparation of high school teachers, but no action in this regard was taken during his tenure (Shannon 272). When the Board finally reestablished the high school course at Trenton in 1925, it was recognized as both a normal school and a teachers college (Jarrold 77-78, *Catalog* 1928 5).

Even though both men and women were admitted to Montclair from the beginning, the overwhelming majority of both students and faculty was female.¹⁵ The roots of the feminization of teaching extended back to colonial towns, where mothers taught their own children at home and eventually some were hired to teach other youngsters. Female teachers prepared boys for the next level of schooling (taught by men) and girls for basic literacy (to read the Bible and carry out household tasks) and, as a bonus to the town, worked for very little compensation. They set the pattern for the respectable twentieth-century vocation of teaching for women (Tyack and Hansot 19-21). Indeed, until the 1948 academic year, most students preparing to be teachers at Montclair State were female.

¹⁵ The only male graduate in the initial 1910 class of 45 students, William O. Trapp, subsequently won a 1929 Pulitzer Prize in journalism for his newspaper, the *New York Evening World*, when he directed an investigation of ambulance chasing (*New York Times* 7/8/64). In a note to the Alumni Association, probably from the 1950s, he wrote: “I was the first male to graduate from Montclair since I was the only man to get a diploma in 1910—surrounded by lovely young women.” One of them, Hilgunda Lankering from the class of 1911, served as president of the Alumni Association from 1924 to 1925 and married Trapp in 1935.

With regard to race at Montclair, no official records can be found. Judging by the appearance of people in Montclair's yearbooks, *La Campana*, there were very few African American students in any given year and no black faculty at all during the period under study.¹⁶ The school did employ African Americans in nonfaculty positions in maintenance, food service, and the library. Among them was Albert Terry, who arrived in Montclair from North Carolina in 1906 and joined the custodial staff of the normal school upon its opening in 1908.

Terry was a leader in the town's black community and an outstanding athlete, representing the state in long distance races and in national tennis competitions. In addition to his janitorial duties at the normal school, he was instructor, coach, and player for men's basketball and men's and women's tennis. In 1912 the basketball team was in desperate need of assistance in a game against Bloomfield College and called upon Terry. He substituted for another player, posing as a student and leading the team to a final quarter victory. But his first love was tennis, and he reigned as the school's tennis champion until a student finally defeated him in 1931. Although his upward mobility at Montclair State had severe limitations, he stated in 1941, a year or two before he retired: "I love the place like I do my own home" (*Pelican* 12/6/32, *Montclarion* 5/9/41, *MT* 5/13/41).

Many faculty members took additional education and discipline-related courses after being employed at Montclair, and sometimes they led to degrees or diplomas.¹⁷

¹⁶ There were a few Asian students.

¹⁷ See personal cards (now in the MSU archives) filled out by each faculty member, probably in 1924 at the request of the new principal, Harry Sprague.

There were at least two married couples on the normal school faculty,¹⁸ and many more in the college period. One of the early faculty members was John C. Stone, who arrived in the second year of Montclair's operation. He had already authored 15 textbooks in mathematics and was in constant demand as a lecturer. During his tenure at Montclair, he published 60 more textbooks as well as books for mathematics teachers. According to his successor, Virgil S. Mallory, 20 million Stone textbooks were purchased for use in every state (Leef 8, *Pelican* 11/23/33).

Adele Cazin, one of the original nine faculty members, had a certificate from the Trenton State Normal School, a baccalaureate from Teachers College, and a master's degree from Columbia University. She had taught at Teachers College before heading the Physical Science Department at Montclair, and her students were in awe of her mental capacity. She looked "like the average housewife" but "had such a remarkable mind that it was rumored around Montclair that she had sold her brain for a large sum for research after death."¹⁹

Will S. Monroe, a colleague of Chapin at the state normal school in Westfield, Massachusetts, was Montclair's first professor of psychology and the history of education. His numerous publications "brought national attention to the young institution" and helped to "establish the history of education as an important academic discipline" (Cordasco 32). Perhaps immodestly, Monroe wrote in 1914 that at Montclair, Chapin "was given a free hand by the State Board of Education, and he called about him a faculty of exceptional quality and has organized an institution that has won high praise

¹⁸ Blanche and Foster Grossnickle were married before joining the normal school faculty. She had been the principal of an elementary school. At Montclair, she taught penmanship and he taught mathematics. John Stone, the famous mathematician, was married to Louise who taught in the elementary demonstration school.

¹⁹ Memoir of Grace Layer Shorter '16, written in 1997.

at the hands of educational experts” (Monroe 4). Following World War I, Monroe’s expertise led to his 1918 appointment by President Woodrow Wilson to the United States Peace Inquiry Commission as head of the subcommittee on the Balkans (Cordasco 33).

African American students were present at Montclair from the beginning. Mary Lee Moten was in the first class that walked through the doors of the new building in September 1908, and she graduated in January 1912 after an absence (for unknown reasons) of two semesters. Her sister arrived in the fall of 1915 and graduated in 1918. The oldest African American subject in this study stated that, following the enrollment of the Moten sisters, her own sister and three other black students arrived in 1916 and graduated in 1918 from the two-year program. Their names and years of graduation were confirmed by the Office of the Registrar. As noted above, the 30-year-old black custodian Albert Terry apparently was able to play the part of a student in an athletic competition without arousing suspicion, which seems to indicate that African Americans were enrolled and thus his presence did not surprise the opponents. However, there probably were not very many black students. A white graduate of 1916, Grace Layer Shorter, could not remember a single one.²⁰ Nevertheless, African Americans had established a presence from the start.

A much-needed women’s dormitory was built during World War I (1915) and named Edward Russ Hall in memory of the chair of the state Normal School Committee whose bequest provided its funding. After the war, Principal Chapin shepherded the normal school into—in his words—the “new, strange, restless, puzzling, tantalizing age” of the 1920s. Writing in the 1922 yearbook, he urged the graduates to be optimists and

²⁰ Telephone conversation on 8/8/97 and subsequent written memoir.

progressives (*Palatine* 1922 8-9). The renowned progressive, John Dewey, was held in esteem at the normal school and lauded by the student newspaper for his contributions to education (*Pelican* 10/31/29).²¹ Among these was his belief that American education must be democratic in both theory and practice as it prepares students to live in a democracy (M. Wright 1941 203). Whether or not such democratic education was actually practiced at Montclair State will be revealed in Chapter V, “Findings.”

College students of the 1920s came into adolescence during the trauma of the first world war, which ushered in a short age of greater prosperity. College-trained experts were accepted as a necessity in government and the first era of American mass higher education was born (Levine 36, 39). College attendance increased 300% from 1900 to 1930, by which time nearly 20% of college age youth were enrolled in higher education. Simply sharing the college experience with so many others heightened the influence of peer groups and contributed to homogenization among increasingly diverse populations (Fass 126). Nevertheless, there was still some inequality between men and women. For example, Paula Fass cited a study of New York University students showing that women were twice as willing as men to abandon their education for marriage. As a group, college students of the 1920s “established patterns that both in youth and in adulthood others would soon follow, for better or worse, throughout much of the twentieth century” (Fass 122-123).

Life was generally good in the United States, although there were significant exceptions in the case of industrial workers, miners, agricultural laborers, and others. By 1926, one in every six Americans owned a car and the Ford company instituted a

²¹ Dewey was described as “the great educator” by Florence ’28, who remembered that in the normal school “the first thing they taught us” was a Dewey principle: “You learn to do by doing.”

shortened work week of 40 hours in five days. The USA contributed 34.4% of the worldwide industrial production (equivalent to Great Britain, Germany, Japan, and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics combined). Black Americans took pride in the stardom of Duke Ellington, Jelly Roll Morton, and Josephine Baker. The Harlem Renaissance was blossoming as black writers achieved a level of written articulation that gave a voice to their awareness of injustice as well as their attempts to recreate the feeling of black community left behind in the South. The awakening spread from New York throughout the country, leading to a “rich harvest” for African Americans in numerous creative fields in the next two decades (J. Franklin 1988 325-326, 371). In 1926, historian Carter G. Woodson instituted Negro History Week to impress upon both blacks and whites the accomplishments of African Americans.

Chapin to Sprague (1924 to 1929)

In the midst of this “tantalizing age,” Principal Chapin of the Montclair State Normal School died of illness in 1924 and was succeeded by Harry Alonzo Sprague, former superintendent of schools in Summit, New Jersey. This section describes the institution’s transformation from a normal school for elementary training to a teachers college for high school training under Sprague’s leadership.

Sprague, age 39, was a generation younger than Chapin. He had earned a diploma from the Fredonia Normal School, followed by BS and MA degrees from Teachers College at Columbia University. (He would earn a PhD from Teachers College in 1940.) Two years after his appointment, in 1926, responsibility for the five state normal schools was transferred from the Normal School Committee of the Board of Education to a commissioner of education, John Logan.

The confluence of two new people with innovative ideas set the stage for a major change, assisted by a 1926 statewide study that revealed nearly 90% of the state's secondary teachers had received degrees from institutions outside New Jersey—frequently without teacher training (*Catalog* 1928 20, Shannon 302). Within the state, men could take courses in pedagogy at Rutgers beginning in 1895 and earn a bachelor's degree in education after 1923. Prior to 1918, when the College for Women was established at Rutgers, there was not a single *public* college in New Jersey where a woman could earn a baccalaureate (Pettegrove 1983 32).²² Several private colleges—in addition to Trenton State Normal School for a brief period—were a source of high school teachers (Shannon 317-319). But there was no public institution devoted to the preparation of secondary teachers.

In 1927, with a sixth normal school only for elementary teachers about to be constructed, Montclair was selected to become the state's first four-year teachers college with the sole mission of training junior and senior high school teachers (*Catalog* 1928 5). Commissioner of Education Logan made the decision to change the focus at Montclair rather than, for example, at Trenton (which had just restarted its secondary training program in 1925) for at least four reasons.

First, there was an economic advantage in that the only new facilities required were those that would have been needed to relieve the overcrowding even if the institution continued as a normal school. Second, Montclair had an ideal location within

²² The following private (all religiously affiliated) colleges that enrolled women were authorized to grant bachelor's degrees prior to 1918: College of St. Elizabeth, Upsala College, and Mount Saint Mary's College which became Georgian Court College. Other private colleges that subsequently granted bachelor's degrees to women during the period of this study are Alma White College, St. Peter's College (where "women were tolerated in the evening college"), Rider College (business baccalaureate only), Panzer College of Physical Education and Hygiene (physical education baccalaureate at first and then BS), Seton Hall College, Bloomfield College, Caldwell College, and Fairleigh Dickinson College. (Source: Sammartino)

10 miles of nearly a million citizens. Third, the site had convenient access to renowned libraries, museums, and other facilities essential for training high school teachers. And fourth, the mountaintop situation was deemed healthful as well as beautiful. For these and probably other reasons, the state Board of Education adopted the following motion on July 9, 1927:

That the Montclair State Normal School be authorized to grant the degree of A.B. to all students completing a minimum of 192 term-hours of work, or 128 semester hours (American Association [of Teachers] Colleges' standard), in accordance with the curriculum requirements of the institution.

Thus, September 1927 marked the beginning of the first state teachers college in New Jersey. For “administrative economy,” separate fields of specialization were to be developed for Montclair and Trenton (Logan 3-4). Eight additional acres were purchased to accommodate growth, and the new Montclair State Teachers College was accredited in 1929 by the American Association of Teachers Colleges.

The transformation of Trenton and Montclair from two-year normal schools into four-year teachers colleges—although Trenton retained its elementary normal school program as well—exemplified an American trend that began at Albany, New York in 1890 (Harper 135) as

new types of collegiate institutions expanded or [were] created to meet the demand for mass higher education. Normal schools, for example, were transformed into four-year, access-oriented, regional teachers' colleges or state colleges. (Levine 162).

Even though Robert Hutchins—chancellor of the University of Chicago—and other educators attempted to keep the focus of colleges on truth and learning for their own sake rather than on personal advancement (the nineteenth-century ideal), their ideology was forced to succumb to that espoused by John Dewey, who advocated education to meet the individual needs of students (the twentieth-century economic and social reality). The burgeoning high schools required more and better-educated teachers

for their pupil populations, which had more than doubled in the decade after World War I; graduates needed jobs; and the colleges grew to accommodate the need (Levine 101-106, 167-169).

Gunnar Myrdal, a Swedish sociologist, expressed surprise at the relatively low status of teachers in the United States, given the importance attached to education in America (885). Teaching was not considered an elite profession, but it was solidly middle class (Rury 32-33). Most students in teachers colleges could not afford more expensive types of higher education and “aspired to practical training in education or in some other field of similarly low prestige.” The democratization of higher education was attained not by opening up prestigious universities but by expanding institutions such as normal schools that were considered low-status (Levine 167-169). However, even within the institutions that began as normal schools or teachers colleges, it remains to this day a “bewildering paradox” that education departments are relegated to positions of very low regard (Astin 1985 112).

The woeful status of teaching can be explained in part by its history as a women’s profession. Even affirmative action efforts have focused more on enabling minorities to penetrate occupations that traditionally have been considered the province of men than on raising the status of conventional women’s work such as teaching (Lanier quoted in Astin 1985 113). Nevertheless, within the African American community, teaching has been held in higher esteem because of the scarcity of other opportunities for black professionals, freeing the teacher from much competition for prestige (Myrdal 885).

At the end of the 1920s, during Montclair’s first years as a teachers college rather than a normal school, African Americans nationwide continued to progress. In 1927, the musical *Show Boat* marked the first time whites and blacks performed together in a hit

Broadway play. On the labor front, the Negro Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters and Maids, under the leadership of A. Philip Randolph, was granted temporary admission to the American Federation of Labor in 1929. The struggle for permanent recognition was noted in the Montclair State Teachers College student newspaper on at least one occasion (*Pelican* 3/27/30).

But not all news was good. There were dark clouds across the ocean, as the Nazi party claimed 17,000 German members in 1926 and South Africa's racial policies provided reason to coin the term "apartheid" in 1929. In the United States, the enormously popular Amos 'n' Andy radio program used white actors to portray black characters as hapless and humorous. Although that program was insulting to African Americans, the revival of the Ku Klux Klan throughout the country, including New Jersey, was actually threatening.

Along with the new arrivals from the South to the North during World War I had come a revitalized Ku Klux Klan, which was particularly strong in New Jersey from 1923 through 1925. The index to a major state newspaper, the *Newark Evening News*, shows the number of articles on the KKK as follows:

1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929
1	2	3	62	68	25	5	2	1	0

Only in the middle years of prolific coverage did the KKK rate front-page mention—four times in 1923 and once each in 1924 and 1925.

The efforts of Nellie Morrow, an African American, to secure a teaching position in Hackensack following graduation from the Montclair State Normal School in 1922 initiated her family's introduction to the Ku Klux Klan, as described by her brother.

It was a vital and strong organization in the twenties, and New Jersey was an effective operating base. Klan rallies were often held in the open fields of Bergenfield, New Jersey, and the burning of crosses in various communities was a common occurrence. At the height of the controversy over Nellie's

appointment, the Klan met and took due notice of the act. They paraded and harangued and threatened. They even invaded Hackensack with a fiery night-parade, and they let us know by deed and letter that our lives and home were in jeopardy. (Morrow 95)

The Klan had slithered into New Jersey in 1921, crossing the rivers from its established footholds in New York and Pennsylvania. Its initial appeal centered on the championship of Prohibition, but the Klan also touted its standard program of seeing “what it was for in terms of whom it was against” (Chalmers 243). In New Jersey, there were a lot of people to be against as a result of the swift twentieth-century population change. The influx of immigrants who were not “100 percent American” into industrial areas in working-class towns and into servants’ quarters in wealthy communities like Montclair was darkening the state’s complexion. Other enticements were the Klan’s opposition to vice of any kind and its advocacy of old-fashioned religion in general—and New Testament readings in the public schools in particular (Chalmers 243-248, Furer 212). A white man reflecting on his youthful years in the KKK in Indiana during the 1920s asserted that “they wanted you to follow the Bible as long as you didn’t admit that any part of it was Jewish” (Jennings 120). Although there were klaverns in every New Jersey county, the religious appeal proved extremely potent among the Methodist ministers and churchgoers of Monmouth County, where the Klan’s greatest strength developed despite the antagonism of the church’s bishops (Chalmers 248-249, 293-294).

The Klan’s success was marred from the beginning by overt opposition throughout the state. Parade permits in many places were routinely refused, but on June 2, 1923, Point Pleasant allowed the KKK’s first public demonstration in New Jersey. A foretaste of ultimate Klan failure occurred three days later when a secret organizing meeting planned in Perth Amboy was foiled. Approximately 2,500 ethnic opposers from Perth Amboy and neighboring towns learned the “secret” and gathered outside the

meeting hall on the evening of June 5. The convocation was forced to end following some minor incidents of violence.

Amazingly, the Klan called another meeting for the evening of August 30. This time a riot raged and, for the first time in New Jersey history, the state police were called to quell the *mêlée*. At 5:00 the next morning, the last Klansmen were rescued from the hall, but their cause was unraveling rapidly. Many major local newspapers ran anti-Klan articles, including the *New York Times*, *New York Herald*, *New York Tribune*, *New York World*, and *Philadelphia Inquirer* (Furer 217-229). Some momentum was retained through 1925 as the Klan took advantage of publicity in the Scopes trial to promote its views among fundamentalist Christians who opposed the teaching of evolution in the schools, especially in central New Jersey towns like Freehold (Hatch 226-235). There were reports of lynchings in some southern parts of the state (Gresh 5). But interest was waning, and in the 1930s the Klan in New Jersey was primarily a social organization (Chalmers 305).

Although the white press was important in disseminating information to the African American community, numerous black papers were published as well. Prior to 1900 there were at least 11 such papers in New Jersey, and many more were founded in the twentieth century. In the period of this study alone (1927 through 1957), there were at least 18 black newspapers in the state, including two that were religious and one that focused on labor. The papers were published in Atlantic City (2), Camden (2), Montclair, Newark (7), Newfoundland, Orange, Paterson, Red Bank, and Trenton (2).

During these tumultuous times, Montclair pursued its new course as the state's first single-mission teachers college. In the spring of 1927, just prior to Montclair's new designation, the male normal school population was 11 students (less than 2%) and four faculty members (14%). That fall, about 30 men from among more than 50 who applied

for admission entered the newly-designated college (*Catalog* 1928 18). Four years into college status, the total number of students was virtually unchanged but males had increased to 14%, and male faculty reached 50%. Reasons for heightened male interest would have included the attraction of teaching high school rather than elementary school; of receiving a baccalaureate degree with little expense (tuition was free at that time); and of the opening of doors to supervisory positions in education following receipt of a four-year degree rather than the former two-year diploma.

Beginning with the new designation in 1927, Principal Sprague insisted upon a bachelor of arts instead of the traditional bachelor of science degree. He required each student to select a subject matter major and minor so that no one majored in “education.” Curiously, by 1968 Christopher Jencks and David Riesman could still write that relatively few colleges had abolished undergraduate majors in education although there was a clear trend in that direction (235). And even in 1999, a college president opined in the *New York Times* that “we ought to educate and organize teachers according to the subject matter they teach” rather than training teachers “primarily in methods targeted at specific age groups” (Botstein). Montclair State and the teachers college in Albany, New York were pioneers in employing a liberal arts program wherein the main emphasis was on the academic preparation of prospective teachers rather than the methodology of teaching (*MT* 7/9/53, Davis 171). In the words of the controversial Chancellor Hutchins of the University of Chicago, “the liberal arts train the teacher in how to teach, that is, in how to organize, express, and communicate knowledge” (Hutchins 115).

At MSTC, there was an initial choice of five majors—English, foreign languages (French, Latin, or German), mathematics, science, or social studies. Sprague established a new Department of Professional Integration to “integrate the work of the entire college

by coordinating subject matter, teaching technique, observation, practice and other professional aspects of teaching” (*Catalog* 1928 51).²³

The state college entrance examination was required throughout the period under study, and Montclair was able to select the best-qualified students due to keen competition. Only 38% of the 437 applicants for the 1930-31 academic year were accepted, and 9% of the new students were valedictorians of their high school classes (*MT* 4/8/31). Sometimes even valedictorians could not be admitted to certain majors (Partridge 1983 63). Sprague asserted that in the late 1920s, “backward” high school students were assured by their teachers that “they could always get into a teachers college if they were turned down elsewhere. We changed this. You should have heard the howls!” (*NEN* 10/9/49). In the words of his successor:

Harry Sprague told me one time that when they decided to go into selective admissions, his colleagues in the state told him it would never work because they never got enough applicants to fill up, anyway. But he said the minute he announced that there would be selective admissions to Montclair, the number of applicants increased tremendously. Now this kind of thing, of course, breeds success. Once it becomes the prestige institution to get into, the word spreads around and it’s not difficult to attract outstanding students who feel that their first choice should be the college that has the highest criteria for the selection of its students. This, of course, is one reason why Montclair has developed the reputation it has, because of the quality of the applicants who come to the College. (Partridge 1980)

A recent study by the American Council on Education revealed that students who aspire to teach elementary school and who do graduate from college score below the national average on the Scholastic Assessment Test, whereas those who plan to teach

²³ In 1957, the Department of Professional Integration was renamed the Department of Education and the department head expressed concern over the possible loss of emphasis on integrating all aspects of teacher preparation (*Annual Report* 1957 115). But the following year, the 1958 Middle States report noted that “one of the chief guarantees of good teaching is the knowledge of subject matter” and stated that “the emphasis on this philosophy is apparent at Montclair, and the Committee was impressed by the emphasis placed on scholarly achievement” (4).

high school score about 100 points above the national average. If the same approximate situation prevailed in 1927, it is not surprising that the competition was stiffer and the quality higher when the institution switched from elementary to secondary preparation.

The state legislature appropriated \$225,000 in 1927 for the construction of a second dormitory, following a dozen years of requests for such a facility by Principals Chapin and Sprague both. That same year, Principal Jerohn Savitz of the Glassboro State Normal School had requested \$171,000 for a dormitory to house 120 students. He received only \$115,000 for 80 students. Disclaiming any intention to “quarrel with my co-laborers,” Savitz pointed out that “Montclair asked for \$225,000 for 102 students and got all of it” (Bole 54).

Reasons for the seeming favoritism toward Montclair may have included the state’s desire to ensure affordable housing at its only public teachers college as well as the higher cost of living and building in the northern section of the state. The second women’s dormitory, named Charles Chapin Hall in memory of the institution’s first principal, was opened in 1928 and filled immediately. Like the first dormitory, Russ Hall, it did not house any African American students; they were compelled to commute, find accommodations with local families, or live at the town’s black YWCA.

In 1929, 37.5 additional acres were purchased, bringing the campus size to 70.5 acres (Sprague 1937 5). Also in 1929, a highly successful foreign exchange program was initiated for language majors and the first “extension” (part-time) courses were offered on campus and in centers around the state. Another milestone was the opening of a demonstration high school—the first and probably the only one of its kind in the country. It was not essentially for supervised teaching, as was the case at other institutions, but for testing, observing, and demonstrating the best secondary school teaching practices (*Pelican* 12/9/30).

In each of College High School's six grades (7 through 12), there were approximately 25 pupils who were selected after taking an entrance exam. According to Frances Thornhill Morris, a subject in this study who was the first black pupil in the school,²⁴ the exam was two or three hours long. "One of the reasons they admitted me was because I scored the highest on the exam. So they were not forced to, but there was no reason not to take me in. This, of course, was well before affirmative action." There was also a personal interview with the director, who worried about Frances's ability to handle her singular status in the school. Her mother "said of course I could. There was no reason why I couldn't."

Many of the pupils were children of the college professors, and as a group they were somewhat brighter than average (except possibly the siblings of pupils who were already in the school, whom Frances recalled being admitted regardless of test scores). A survey of the graduates of 1951 through 1954 revealed that nearly two-thirds had IQs from 115 to 134, with the remaining graduates about equally divided above and below that range (Binford 25). When the Ford Foundation awarded scholarships in 1952 for high school sophomores to attend college on a "speed-up" program, four of Montclair's 27 College High School sophomores received scholarships (Davis 100). The 1958 Middle States visitors noted the exceptional quality of the student body and expressed concern that the school "doubtless prepares teachers to handle select groups of students but not necessarily normal groups of children" (10).²⁵

²⁴ John Areson, a pupil in both the primary demonstration school of the Montclair State Normal School and, later, College High School, saw no African Americans in any class (conversation on 12/16/99).

²⁵ John Areson believed his classmates were brighter than average, and many went on to prestigious universities and careers. But he was a self-proclaimed troublemaker: "I felt that I was showing future teachers some of the problems that they may encounter. Most of the students were very goody-goody!"

Tuition was not charged at College High School, but pupils paid a small fee to cover extracurricular activities. The department heads and other professors from the college served as faculty members at the high school, and the college students sat in the back of the room to observe their teaching. The professors often paused during a lesson to instruct the observing college students on the reasons for selecting particular teaching methods (Partridge 1981 3). Educators from across the nation as well as from other continents visited the College High School “laboratory” (Binford 25, *Newark Sunday Call* 4/22/34).

Sprague: The Depression (1929 to 1941)

In October 1929, the stock market crashed and ushered in the decade-long Depression. This section addresses the changes that occurred at Montclair State Teachers College resulting from the Depression, as well as sociological and legal changes throughout the country that affected African American students in particular.

At Montclair State Teachers College, the effects of the Depression were not immediate. In January 1930, the last normal school class graduated, bringing to a total of 3,921 the number of two-year diplomas granted. There were 27 graduates in the last normal school class; coincidentally, in June of that year, there were also 27 graduates in the first college class. All of them had transferred in as sophomores, including 16 students who already had graduated from the Montclair State Normal School and two from the Newark State Normal School. The others had taken their first year of work at Columbia, Newark College of Engineering, Rutgers, St. Elizabeth’s, Upsala, and Waynesburg. There were eight men, but no African Americans—although the yearbook, for unspecified reasons, refers to the Student Council’s “inter-racial enthusiasm” (*La*

Campanilla 1930 106). The first college class viewed itself as “a selected group created for the purpose of experimentation” (29).

In addition, 1930 marked the first summer session, the college’s hosting of the second annual national conference of normal schools and teachers colleges, and the establishment of the Mental Hygiene Institute (*MT* 9/13/30, Sprague 1933 6). The Mental Hygiene Institute trained high school teachers in tests and measurements and personality problems of high school pupils (*Catalog* 1931-32 36). In 1931, a national charter was granted to MSTC by Kappa Delta Pi, an honorary scholastic society (*MT* 4/8/31).

Then the setbacks began. In 1931, financial constraints caused the state legislature to rescind a \$375,000 appropriation for sorely needed new buildings, five days after construction bids were opened (Sprague 1933 6, *Pelican* 1/15/32). The next year brought better news. Montclair was approved as the first of the original six normal schools to offer the master’s degree, including graduate courses for practicing high school teachers who had baccalaureate degrees but little or no professional teacher training (*Pelican* 5/27/32). With the beginning of the master’s program, Sprague finally became a president rather than a principal. Educators and graduate students from Columbia University Teachers College and New York University often visited Montclair State, considering it “one of the best examples of professional teacher training,” in the words of a Columbia professor (*Pelican* 12/9/30, 12/11/31, 5/13/32).

But more bad news followed. Although no tuition had been charged at any of the six state institutions previously, the lingering Depression made payment of \$50 a year necessary in 1932. The state legislature then raised the annual tuition in 1933 to \$100 (where it remained through the mid-1950s) and began requiring students to purchase their own books and supplies. The student newspaper ran an editorial:

Although the sum is modest, it looms largely in the sight of many members of our student body who are working their way through college and had not counted upon this expense. We have assurance that the authorities will do all in their power to assist present undergraduates to pay their fees. (*Pelican* 6/17/32)

Also in 1932, after initiating the tuition charge, the state legislature passed a law deducting a percentage from the salaries of all faculty members and other state employees for the State Emergency Relief Fund. The amounts ranged from 1% to 10% annually depending upon the size of the salary, with the average cut at approximately 7% (Davis 88).

In 1934, some relief was obtained for students through the National Youth Administration (NYA), which provided financial aid to 90 Montclair students in the form of work scholarships (Davis 103). By working in a campus office one hour a day, five days a week, students earned the entire amount of a year's tuition and provided much-appreciated assistance to the faculty and staff. When the program was discontinued by the NYA, the state picked it up.

In addition, the state established a loan program through which 10% of the student body could borrow the cost of tuition and repay it beginning one year after graduation at 4% interest. In 1937, the state legislature created scholarships for 10% of the freshman class at each state teachers college, "awarded to [financially] needy students in the order of excellence as determined by a competitive examination" ("Opportunities in Teacher Education" 4, Davis 103-106). Many students also had off-campus jobs, and a popular location was Newark due to its large department stores. In the 1941 academic year, 30 Montclair students worked in Newark stores (*Annual Report* 1940-41 66).

Notwithstanding the financial aid programs noted above, higher education funding was notoriously poor in New Jersey. The governor's School Survey Commission reported in 1933 that only one of the 48 states provided less for higher

education, and by 1946 New Jersey was at the very bottom of the list. The situation had not improved by 1965, when a *New York Times* article stated:

New Jersey has been described publicly by John W. Gardner, the new Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, as “that educational wasteland.” And among university admissions officers across the country, New Jersey is commonly referred to as the “Cuckoo State.” The cuckoo likes to drop its young into the nests of other birds and avoid the job of raising them. New Jersey leads the nation in sending its students to colleges and universities outside the state. This has created what is known nationally in university circles as the “New Jersey problem.” . . . There are six state colleges that began as normal schools. These institutions have been primarily responsible for supplying the state with teachers for its public schools. In fact, to be admitted to one, a student has had to pledge to become a teacher in New Jersey. (12/5/65 87A)

The last comment referred to the state’s requirement that students sign a pledge to teach in New Jersey for two (later, three) years or repay the cost of their education.²⁶

Unless a student attended Rutgers (the state university)—or, later, the New Jersey College for Women that subsequently became Douglass—a public college education meant enrolling in one of the state teachers colleges. Not surprisingly, many students who did not want to teach found themselves in teachers colleges because they had no alternatives. Families without means still had a relatively inexpensive option for higher education in comparison with private or out-of-state colleges. In fact, both the quality and quantity of the student body at Montclair increased during the Depression for at least two reasons. Families that would have sent their children to private colleges in better times were forced to use the state teachers colleges, and high school graduates who normally would have gone directly into the business world were unable to secure positions and went to the teachers colleges instead (Davis 106).

²⁶ According to Davis (74), the pledge was strictly enforced during the normal school period and Principal Chapin had in his file the receipts for payment from two students of \$200 for the tuition the state had made available to them. During the Depression it became a difficult task to place any graduate, and the state eventually dropped its enforcement of the pledge although it remained on the application blank to be signed.

Students who did graduate with teaching certification, including many prospective white teachers, could not always find jobs.²⁷ Even those who were fortunate enough to be employed faced financial hardship during the Depression, as noted above. A white normal school graduate reported that she and her colleagues were required to return 10% of their salaries, and it was never repaid.²⁸

Students made the best of the depressed conditions. The class of 1933, which entered in the fall of 1929 as the stock market crashed, exulted in its yearbook:

They told us that there was a depression, but the Senior class of '33 proved that they were all wrong. The social committee balanced budgets and cut expenses and gave to the Seniors a program more diversified and more brilliant than any other class, even in the days of '29, had hoped to achieve. (*La Campana* 1933 150)

In 1932 the Interracial Committee of the New Jersey Conference of Social Work issued a report titled *The Negro in New Jersey*. It encompassed a vast array of issues to which responses had been offered through local surveys in 60 communities, including Montclair, that covered 80% of the state's black population. The report addressed a variety of concerns such as education, teacher education, teacher employment, and community life. The committee found that in 1930, most African American teachers in New Jersey were employed in the elementary grades by so-called Negro schools in southern counties; only 8% of the black teachers were in the northern counties that served 54% of the black pupils (29, 37). Devore's black interviewees, who graduated from the state's normal schools prior to 1930, testified to the existence of the separate elementary schools in south Jersey in which they were obliged to teach (Devore 125, 183). The Interracial Committee found approximately 60 black students in the state normal schools,

²⁷ At a reunion on 4/30/94, several white alumni affirmed that most graduates did not get jobs immediately because there were none available.

²⁸ From a telephone conversation with Kathleen O'Brien Kimble '27 on 5/6/98.

but placement was “usually difficult as the turnover is low and many principals prefer hiring teachers of experience from other sections of the country” (38). The principal of an unnamed state normal school had acknowledged:

I am not discussing the ethics of the situation—this is the case—it is impossible for us to create positions in the public schools of the state—although the state expects that a teacher trained in our institutions will at least teach two years in our own state after graduation. (38)

As related by some subjects in this study, the state in practice ignored that requirement when it came to black graduates. It would have been embarrassing, to say the least, to enforce a pledge that its own policies prevented carrying out. Nevertheless, job opportunities had increased from 1919, when the northern counties employed only 3% of the black teachers. Most of those teachers were in the elementary grades. In 1932, the state’s only black high school teacher was in Jersey City (Interracial Committee 37-38, M. Wright 206). In 1935, the lack of teaching opportunities in northern New Jersey remained “a bone of contention” (E. Hall 88).

Discrimination was evident not only in teaching, but in all other aspects of life as well. Citizens of Newark, where doctors were not permitted to intern or practice in “white” hospitals, were central in the fight to end Jim Crow practices. In 1932, the newly-established Newark Interracial Council was the first mixed group to protest by exerting pressure on city government, civic organizations, and leading citizens. In addition, throughout the 1930s, a number of respected black speakers addressed white groups in the city. These included sociologist Ira Reid (Director of Research for the National Urban League), writer Countee Cullen, and William Pickens (Director of Branches of the NAACP). The *Newark Evening News* regularly printed articles and letters on the “Negro problem” in daily life and the state’s leading black newspaper, the *New Jersey Herald News*, was founded in Newark in 1938 (Price 1981 220-221).

When the Depression began, African Americans accounted for a higher percentage of the citizenship in New Jersey than in any other northern or midwestern state (Interracial Committee 19), and the black population had continued to become more urban (G. Wright 54). By October 1933, three or four times as many blacks as whites were receiving public assistance in several large urban centers (J. Franklin 1988 341). African Americans often were the first to lose their jobs when whites, who previously shunned menial labor, displaced blacks in their desperation to support themselves and their dependents. Black men who moved to northern cities were less likely than black women to secure work, paving the way toward idleness, frustration, drunkenness, and crime (J. Franklin 1988 421-422). Richard Wright's 1940 novel, *Native Son*, and Ann Petry's 1946 novel, *The Street*, are excellent illustrations of the degradation and desperation of unemployed urban blacks described by Franklin.

In 1935, 26% of New Jersey families on relief were black, although they constituted only about 5% of the state's citizenry, and they tended to remain unemployed longer than whites (G. Wright 63). In Montclair, residents in 1930 established a town Bureau of Occupations through which citizens were hired to work for the town. It merged with a state agency the following year. Data for the first six months showed that 62.1% of the applicants were black and 37.9% were white (*MT* 6/3/31, 11/24/31).²⁹ In addition, African American citizens formed the Montclair Unemployment Relief and Welfare Organization to assist in providing labor and funds where needed (Alloway and Arny 55).

²⁹ One of the "applicants" in 1936 was a "neglected Negro infant, abandoned by an Italian man and wife who disclaim it as theirs, because of its color" (Fifield 15).

President Herbert Hoover's efforts to stabilize the economy, which included his voluntary 20% pay cut, were insufficient, and in 1932 he was defeated by Franklin D. Roosevelt, who promised a "New Deal." Roosevelt devised one relief organization after another, many of which kept families alive and also contributed to public projects that would benefit future generations. The National Youth Administration was especially important for black young people, who constituted 10% of the participants in the student work program and thus obtained the funds to begin or continue their education. The Civilian Conservation Corps was segregated, but provided both work and literacy programs for about 200,000 young black men. The Public Works Administration built new schools that benefited black students who tended to live in older neighborhoods with poor educational facilities. Through the Works Progress (later, Projects) Administration (WPA), unemployed teachers were hired and 400,000 African Americans, among others, were taught reading and writing (Myrdal 343).³⁰

Blacks over the age of 14 (here considered the potential labor force) were at least twice as likely as whites to be employed in public emergency work such as the WPA and the NYA. The 1940 census listed the percentages of the total labor force versus the nonwhite labor force in public emergency work as follows:

Group	New Jersey	Essex County	Montclair
Total Labor Force	4.2	3.0	4.0
Nonwhite Labor Force	12.8	11.0	8.0

³⁰ Alma, a subject of this study, commented: "I imagine a lot of people missed going further in education because of the hard times. . . . You hear all sorts of jokes and laughter and disparagements about the WPA, but it did some terrific things."

Census data for 1940 and 1950 also showed that the percentage of blacks who were employed in any type of work was higher than the percentage employed in the general population in both Essex County and Montclair:

Year	Essex County	Essex Blacks	Montclair	M. Blacks
1940	54.0	62.0	53.0	70.0
1950	56.3	62.8	54.0	65.2

In 1930, 62.9% of Montclair’s white families had owned their homes, whereas only 22.5% of black families were homeowners. In 1940, the effects of the Depression showed lower figures for both groups: 51.7% of white families and 20.3% of black families owned their homes.

The National Industrial Recovery Act, intended to establish codes of fair competition for various jobs, did not actually help many black employees, who were afraid to complain of violations for fear of being fired. And unfortunately, the Social Security Act denied benefits to many African Americans because agricultural and domestic workers were excluded. Likewise, the Fair Labor Standards Act (“wages and hours bill”) did little to help blacks due to the same exclusions (J. Franklin 1988 352-356).

Montclair State assisted groups throughout the state in understanding more fully the significant changes taking place in American economic life—such as various New Deal agencies, governmental monetary policy, etc.—by preparing a package of slides and a written lecture that could be borrowed at no charge except transportation costs (*MT* 1/16/34). The college also was the site of numerous WPA projects from 1935 to 1941, including an athletic field for football, baseball, and track that required the clearing of a swamp; an outdoor stone amphitheater that was used for commencement ceremonies (beginning in 1939), plays, and other activities; a manual training shop; storage facilities; tennis courts; roads and curbing; walls and fences; a parking lot; landscaping and

grading; trails through the woods; rustic fireplaces in the fields; and repairs to rooms, furniture, and books (*Annual Report* 1941 6, *Montclarion* 5/9/41, 1/30/42).

Despite the Depression, American accomplishments were notable in technology, construction, politics, and society. Like others, African Americans experienced both grief and glory. In addition to the general negative effects of the Depression, two black men were lynched in Indiana, and New York City experienced serious race riots resulting from accusations of police brutality toward a young black shoplifter. Blues singer Bessie Smith died after being refused admission to a segregated hospital in Tennessee following an auto accident and Marian Anderson was refused permission by the Daughters of the American Revolution to sing at Constitution Hall in Washington. The separate-but-equal doctrine had become firmly entrenched since the Supreme Court's *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision in 1896.

Yet during the same period, blacks of both parties secured seats in state legislatures, particularly in 10 states that included New Jersey (J. Franklin 1988 347-348). William Hastie was appointed the nation's first black federal judge; Marian Anderson received an honorary doctorate from Harvard University; Hattie McDaniel was the first black woman to receive an Oscar, for her portrayal of a slave in *Gone With the Wind* (a traditional role for black performers); Dean Dixon was the first African American to conduct a major American orchestra; Joe Louis won the world heavyweight boxing championship, a title he would keep for 11 years; and 10 African Americans competed in the 1936 Olympic Games held in Germany, where Jesse Owens won four gold medals to the chagrin of Adolf Hitler and the host country.

There was increased activity on the legal front of racial equality. In 1931, nine black boys were convicted of raping two white girls in Scottsboro, Alabama; the Supreme Court reversed the convictions four years later. In 1933, black New Yorkers organized

the Citizens' League for Fair Play, which succeeded in obtaining employment for African Americans by picketing with the slogan, "Don't Buy Where You Can't Work" (J. Franklin 1988 355-356). In 1934, an organized attack against educational discrimination was initiated by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), which had been established in 1910 to secure equal rights for African Americans and within 15 years had won three important decisions before the Supreme Court (J. Franklin 1988 286-288).

At first, the NAACP's target was the blatant inequality of schooling rather than the constitutionality of segregation itself (Bond 482). The NAACP then began to focus on higher education. In 1938 the Supreme Court decided in *Missouri ex rel. Gaines v. Canada, Registrar of the University, et al.* that individual states have a duty to provide education within the state for all their citizens. Thus, a black student was not obliged to accept a state scholarship for an out-of-state law school, but could enroll instead in the University of Missouri School of Law (J. Franklin 1988 365). In 1940, the American Negro Exposition was held in Chicago to celebrate the Emancipation Proclamation.

Changes continued in New Jersey higher education. The normal school presidents and others had repeatedly urged the state Board of Education to require a four-year bachelor's degree program for elementary certification, as had been accomplished already in neighboring states. In 1934 the Board finally required the remaining five normal schools to establish four-year courses for their elementary programs, and in 1937 they were all designated teachers colleges offering the traditional bachelor of science degree (Bole 74-75). (Montclair State, it will be recalled, offered a bachelor of *arts*.) It took a relatively long time for New Jersey to catch up to the rest of the country in completing the transition to four-year teachers colleges.

That same year, 1937, Montclair was the first state teachers college ever to be accredited by the Middle States Association, which used its normal liberal arts standards because there were no separate criteria for teachers colleges. Montclair's graduate program was accredited by Middle States in 1938.

The quality of the students at Montclair was high. In 1939, Robert H. Morrison, the state director of teacher education, submitted a report to the commissioner of education that included the high school rankings of freshmen at all six state teachers colleges. At Montclair, 92% ranked in the top quarter of their high school classes; the nearest competitor was Trenton with 66% (Morrison 6). President Sprague reprinted in his 1939-40 annual report some of the material submitted to Middle States for Montclair's initial accreditation. He included the results of a recent American Council on Education national testing program, which ranked Montclair eleventh among more than 350 colleges across the country. "From the standpoint of the quality of the student body, the college at Montclair is among the highest three per cent" (8). The National Teachers Examination (NTE) was required of every fourth class of seniors and offered to other classes on a voluntary basis. In his 1940-41 annual report, Sprague quoted the Cooperative Test Bureau concerning the results of the NTE: "Your students show an outstanding performance on this test, for their median total scores exceed those of all other groups" (4).

Additional early accreditations were given by the Association of American Universities in 1940 (again, the first state teachers college so accredited) and the American Association of Teachers Colleges (AATC) in 1941 for the graduate program, adding to its 1929 accreditation of the undergraduate program. Sprague served as president of the AATC in 1935-36 (*MT* 4/28/77) and headed or was a member of numerous other statewide and national professional organizations.

Montclair State Teachers College claimed several other “firsts” during President Sprague’s tenure, despite the Depression. Among them were the first transcontinental bus trip ever attempted by a college group when two professors accompanied 14 students on a two-month educational summer tour in 1938 to California and back (*MT* 9/2/38).³¹ By 1946 there were 36 participants, and 10 credits were earned in social studies (*MT* 6/27/46). In 1939, New Jersey was the first state to join its teachers colleges with the national program of air training in universities. Civilian aviation instruction was provided at MSTC in conjunction with flight training at a nearby airport, and one female student was among the enrollees in 1940 (*MT* 10/27/39, 10/11/40, 10/29/40). In 1941, the first high school Association of International Relations Clubs was inaugurated at MSTC, with more than 100 delegates from 20 New Jersey secondary schools in attendance (*MT* 5/27/41).

While the United States wrestled with the Depression, unrest also prevailed in much of the outside world. The Nazis gained political power in Germany, with a million members by 1931 (an increase of 5,782% in five years); Argentina and Brazil experienced revolutions; the Japanese premier was assassinated; Adolf Hitler became the chancellor of Germany; China declared war on Japan in 1936 and Japan attacked China in 1937; the Spanish Civil War began; the British king abdicated his throne; the USSR joined the League of Nations and Italy withdrew from it; the United States declared itself neutral in the European and Asian conflicts in 1937—and World War II broke out in Europe in 1939. The American economy began to recover through orders for war equipment and arms. However, the anxiety and fear generated by worldwide unrest was

³¹ Shorter tours along the east coast had been offered previously.

evident in the despair and alarm with which many Americans reacted to Orson Welles' 1938 radio broadcast of a fantasy about a Martian invasion of Earth (Allen 262).

Sprague: World War II (1941 to 1945)

The war years brought sudden changes to Montclair State Teachers College in terms of enrollment, curriculum, and social life. The loss of classmates, friends, and family was sobering in an environment previously characterized more by gaiety and anticipation of rewarding careers and home lives. In addition, national events had an impact on the social and racial awareness of college students along with all other American citizens.

In 1941, Roosevelt began his unprecedented third term as president of the United States and articulated the "four freedoms" for which the war in Europe allegedly was being fought: freedom of speech and worship, and freedom from want and fear. At the end of the year, the US entered the fray when Congress declared war on Japan following the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7 (with one dissenting vote from the first woman representative in Congress). Food rationing was instituted, "dim-outs" were enforced, and the cost of living rose almost 30%.

Millions of Americans of all racial and ethnic backgrounds served their country in the military. The black troops, although proportionally representative of African Americans in the general population, were segregated. The irony of the world's greatest democracy fighting the world's greatest racist with a racially separate army did not escape notice (Ambrose 345, J. Franklin 1988 387, 390). Walter Wright, chief historian of the army, wondered at the astonishing willingness of any black soldier to fight under such circumstances, knowing "that the color of his skin will automatically disqualify him for reaping the fruits of attainment." But the black troops were successful, and their

humane treatment of German prisoners of war engendered a saying among the POWs:

“The best American is a black American” (Ambrose 346-347). In many cases, the troops were forced to work together, and one white battalion commander reported on the outcome:

White men and colored men are welded together with a deep friendship and respect born of combat and matured by a realization that such an association is not the impossibility that many of us have been led to believe. . . . When men undergo the same privations, face the same dangers before an impartial enemy, there can be no segregation. My men eat, play, work, and sleep as a company of men, with no regard to color. (Ambrose 349)

While such startling social experiences “prepared the ground for Jim Crow’s grave,” it would be some time before he could be buried.³² For example, in 1944 a group of nine black soldiers was refused service in a southern restaurant while two dozen German POWs and their American guards were welcomed freely (Ambrose 345). Civilians, of course, fared no better. In 1945, the eminent black historian John Hope Franklin needed access to various state archives.

Louisiana had a strict policy of excluding would-be Negro readers altogether. In the summer of 1945 I was permitted by the Louisiana director of archives to use the manuscript collection since the library was closed in observance of the victory of the United States over governmental tyranny and racial bigotry in Germany and Japan. As I have said elsewhere, pursuing Southern history was for me a strange career. (Sollors 293)

The military, at least, did lay old Jim Crow to rest within 10 years as the highly and officially segregated army metamorphosed to a highly and successfully integrated organization (Ambrose 350).

Black actor Ossie Davis, who was a student at Howard University during Roosevelt’s presidency, cited his appreciation for Eleanor Roosevelt’s actions during the

³² Even in 1999, Malcolm Gillis, president of Rice University, asserted that “the body of Jim Crow is still warm” (3).

war. Her visit with African American pilot trainees at Tuskegee Institute particularly impressed him: “Eleanor didn’t make a speech. . . . The black pilot got in, and they took off. . . . [We] recognized her as a special friend of black people because of things that she did, and quietly said” (Jennings 160). Historian Doris Kearns Goodwin and others have asserted that, in many ways, Eleanor Roosevelt was the moving force behind her husband’s efforts toward racial equality.

At Montclair State Teachers College, where courses were already being offered in civilian aviation, other changes resulted from World War II. The male student population plummeted as men left for military service, causing the abandonment of the annual football rivalry with Trenton State Teachers College as Trenton cited “the depletion of men, the difficulty of transportation and the increased expenses” (*Montclarion* 4/10/42). The next year, MSTC’s baseball possibilities were uncertain as well. Coach Chester Pittser “forewarned that half-heartedness on the part of any player would not be tolerated, that present day conditions do not warrant carelessness in any endeavor, no matter how trivial in appearance it may be” (*Montclarion* 3/30/43). A number of faculty members also took leaves of absence to serve in the war.

A War Information Center was established at Montclair State. Three new defense courses were initiated and opened to the public; male students requested and received a voluntary Students’ Military Training Corps within the Physical Education Department for instruction in basic army training; an accelerated program enabled students to graduate in three and a half years; campus facilities were opened to the town’s Civil Air Patrol for evening classes; there was an active campus chapter of the Red Cross; a new program enabled students and faculty to work on local farms for 35 cents an hour to aid in the country’s food production; and women students engaged their creativity in shaping a social life minus men.

The campus newspaper, the *Montclarion*, devoted a great deal of space to war-related issues. Its poll of student opinion regarding the accelerated three and a half year program revealed that many men were pleased at the increased opportunity to graduate before being drafted, but many other students believed it “would be a mental and physical strain” (1/30/42). There were also letters from classmates in the service, reports of student deaths in the war, and changes in campus lifestyle in a female environment. Students joked about requesting “farmerette” assignments to pick apples at the Orchard Rest—which, unbeknownst to the Victory Farm Committee, was a local pub (7/16/43).

Some academic progress was attained during and following the war. In 1944, Sprague instituted an annual summer program called the China Workshop. In a cooperative venture, the China Institute in America provided professors for graduate courses in Chinese history, art, and music while the college furnished facilities (*Annual Report* 1944 39, Davis 135). Three new majors were added—business education in 1938, music in 1944, and speech in 1950. Sprague was described by his dean of instruction as “a master at manipulating the options at his disposal.” For example, Montclair had approval for a minor in music, but not a major. Sprague simply submitted course after course for approval by the Board of Education until there were enough credits to justify a major—much to the vexation of the president of Trenton State, which already had the state’s only music major (Partridge 1983 90-91, Morrison 2). The *Newark Evening News* (5/25/39) reported that the music major was being offered in 1939, which lends credence to the above portrayal of Sprague inasmuch as the major was not official until 1944.

In 1938, the German major within the Foreign Languages Department was changed to a minor due to a drop in enrollment (*Catalog* 1940-42 72, *MT* 10/8/40), likely resulting from disillusionment with all things German. Simultaneously, the Spanish program was flourishing and had become a major within the Foreign Languages

Department by 1942. The graduate division was growing as well, with the seventh graduate program approved in 1948.

The quality of the faculty remained high. In 1945 a comparison was made of academic qualifications at the six state teachers colleges, with one point or fraction thereof awarded for each year of college work (baccalaureate = 4, master's = 5, doctorate = 7). Montclair's average was 6.28 and the next highest was only 5.81 at Jersey City; the lowest was 5.37 at Newark (*Annual Report* 1945 24).

Sprague's selective student admission strategy was successful as well, reaching its zenith just prior to World War II with three times as many applicants as openings. However, during the war, "we have accepted practically all who applied. As would be expected, this has resulted in a lower average ability in the student body" (*Annual Report* 1941 46). With men away at war and women working to fill their vacant positions in industry and elsewhere, the number of applicants naturally had dropped significantly.

African Americans gained ground in the United States throughout the war, perhaps because of the new racial awareness that was forced upon citizens as they dealt with black servicemen. Racial wage discrimination, which had been particularly pronounced in the teaching profession, was declared unconstitutional in 1940 (Myrdal 320). In January 1941, labor leader A. Philip Randolph planned the first March on Washington in an effort to secure the employment of African Americans in defense industries. In June of that year, before the march could take place, Roosevelt issued an executive order prohibiting discrimination in government as well as defense industries, and the march was called off (J. Franklin 1988 387-388). Between 1933 and 1946, black federal employees increased from about 50,000 to 200,000, although their positions were mainly low level ones (J. Franklin 1988 351). Roosevelt also established the Fair Employment Practices Committee (Chase 56).

The interracial Congress of Racial Equality was formed in 1942 to advocate nonviolent action. In other positive developments for African Americans, Paul Robeson was hailed on Broadway; *Porgy and Bess* opened with an all-black cast; and Jackie Robinson and Larry Doby broke the color barrier in major league baseball. Sharpe James, a 1958 alumnus of the Panzer College (which merged with Montclair State a few weeks after his graduation), recalled the hope and spirit Robinson's appointment provided to the black community: "I guess the thinking was that if you could break [the color barrier] in baseball, anything else in the world was possible" (Jennings 288). James went on to become the mayor of Newark, New Jersey.

In New Jersey, the NAACP and a black newspaper, the *New Jersey Herald News*, challenged the adequacy of the curriculum of the Manual Training and Industrial School for Colored Youth at Bordentown in 1941, leading to a concerted movement to abolish all public school segregation within the state (M. Wright 1953 403). Results would be evident in the near future.

But there were also setbacks for African Americans during the war years. Several northern cities experienced race riots, some triggered by southern blacks "taking" positions from white workers. White students in Indiana boycotted classes in an effort to have black students transferred to other schools. And the overt and official hostility against Japanese Americans made it painfully obvious that the United States had not yet become a true racial melting pot.

Gunnar Myrdal's monumental analysis of blacks in the United States, *An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*, was published in 1944 and credited with contributing to a "positive impact on racial attitudes" (*Dictionary of American History*). As a Swede, Myrdal presumably could critique the American situation with more objectivity and less passion than natives who had personal stakes in

either changing or continuing the status quo. He investigated the patterns of discrimination and prejudice that had originated in the cotton-growing areas of the South and were still in evidence in the mid-twentieth century throughout the country. Myrdal observed that “the continuation of racism after cotton was no longer ‘king’ is an example of the sociological principle that ideologies continue after the conditions that gave rise to them no longer exist” (xxviii).

At Montclair State, racial issues were beginning to be acknowledged in the classroom and elsewhere on campus. In a course titled “Racial Contributions to American Life,” taught in the 1940s by a white professor, students conducted surveys in each of the state’s 21 counties to determine what racial groups were present and where they had settled. In the same course, students went to Harlem “to catch the spirit of Negro church services,” visit a tenement family, and interview Father Divine (*Montclarion* 3/19/45). Another course titled “Field Studies in Urban Life” included a unit on “the urban Negro,” with trips to Harlem and elsewhere. It too was taught by a white male and was immensely popular with several African American alumni who were interviewed for this study. In a course titled “Contemporary Social Life,” students heard more than one talk by Harold Lett, “an outstanding leader among the Negro race” who was assistant director of the state’s new Division Against Discrimination (*Montclarion* 3/7/47).

In connection with Negro History Week, which was observed at the college in 1943 with library exhibits on Negro Culture and The Negro in the War, the student newspaper stated that “in the United States the story of the Negro as an exponent of Democracy is well known” (*Montclarion* 2/12/43). Judging by this and other articles in the college paper, students had a social conscience with regard to the struggles of African Americans throughout the United States. There were references to events off campus

such as racial incidents (for example, the lynching of a black man in Oklahoma in 1930), the lives of African Americans in Harlem (where students went on field trips), and the circumstances of black children (in settings such as reformatories). The accomplishments of black students were generally noted without mention of race. For example, a front-page article in the newspaper reported proudly on the selection of a student who won a coveted scholarship based on “personality and high standing” in her major. There was no reference to her race, although an accompanying photograph clearly revealed that she was black (*Montclarion* 10/13/44).

In 1944, Leslie Pinckney Hill, the black president of Cheyney State Teachers College in Pennsylvania (who was born in Virginia but spent his boyhood in Orange, New Jersey), spoke on cultural relations at an assembly program. The student newspaper printed a message from the dean chiding the student body for its dismal attendance (*Montclarion* 11/10/44). When the end of World War II seemed imminent, the paper solicited reactions and a white student stated astutely: “The military defeat of Germany does not signify the defeat of Nazism in the world any more than the adoption of the Bill of Rights meant the abolition of prejudice in America” (*Montclarion* 5/11/45). Howard Bowen noted that higher education may heighten sensitivity to social problems, breeding both “disaffection with the state of society and the will to bring about amelioration of social problems” (288).

On the other hand, the *Montclarion* printed jokes alluding to African Americans that would be considered tasteless today, but were probably uttered innocently at the time. And in 1945 the paper published an invitation from the Student Government

Association for all faculty and students to attend a “Plantation Party” featuring “a southern style minstrel show complete with blackface comics” (*Montclarion* 10/3/45).³³

The Intercultural Relations Group was formed by students in 1945. Among its activities were a study of the country’s minority groups and prejudices about them, an address by a member of the NAACP, and a talk by a Harlem minister on the “problem of world minorities” (*Montclarion* 2/16/45, 4/27/45, 5/11/45). White students seemed willing to learn.

Sprague: Post World War II (1945 to 1951)

Montclair State Teachers College had to rebuild itself along with the country and much of the world. Under President Sprague’s final years at the helm, MSTC pushed for curricular growth and strained against the physical restrictions of an outgrown facility. Racial issues became more overt in the nation, in the state, and on the campus. They were exemplified at Montclair by a dormitory crisis reminiscent of the one experienced at Harvard University a quarter of a century earlier. (The incident will be described later in this section.)

President Roosevelt died in 1945, just 18 days before Hitler committed suicide and a few months before World War II ended. Despite the cessation of overt war, worldwide peace continued to be elusive. In the words of Winston Churchill, an “iron curtain” descended across Europe. That same year, the United States joined the newly-organized United Nations. When the UN considered a resolution in 1946 condemning racial discrimination in South Africa, perhaps inevitably due to its own national policies

³³ As late as the mid-1950s, a minstrel show apparently was being contemplated and discussed in one of Miss Pennington’s classes. The professor was against the idea; one of the black students, Joyce, discussed it with a white friend. (from a telephone conversation with Elena deMichele Chopek on 1/13/00)

(but still to its shame) the US voted against it (J. Franklin 1988 408-409). Nevertheless, the resolution was passed and gave encouragement to black Americans. In the midst of continued uncertainty, the upbeat American spirit was evidenced through the popularity of the song *Accentuate the Positive*.³⁴

Harry Truman, the new president, recommended an economic recovery program—"Fair Deal"—to provide jobs for returning servicemen and women of all races. As early as 1947, half of all college students in the United States were veterans. African Americans were among the million-plus veterans who enrolled in college under the GI Bill of Rights, which offered up to \$500 a year for tuition and other educational expenses. Unmarried veterans received an additional \$50 per month for each month served, and married veterans got slightly more. Higher education and the resulting higher-level jobs were within the reach of all veterans, regardless of race or class or religion (West Group 158).³⁵

Very few African Americans had been enrolled in New Jersey institutions other than normal schools in the earlier years of this study, although Rutgers and several private colleges did provide some opportunities. In 1929, Beatrice Harvey was the first black woman to graduate from Upsala College. She said it "felt all right—didn't bother me." She played on the basketball team, sometimes stayed overnight in the dormitory after a late game, and recalled only one incident of racism at Upsala.³⁶ After practice teaching at the college's academy on campus, she took a position in Virginia. In 1942,

³⁴ *Accentuate the Positive* was written by Johnny Mercer, whose father's real estate and insurance company had failed in 1927, losing a small fortune for hundreds of stockholders. Young Johnny vowed to repay them, and 28 years later was able to do so through royalties on this and other songs (Gilbert 114-115).

³⁵ Larry Campbell '48, MA '49, was a white veteran and among the first to enroll at MSTC under the GI Bill. He asserted that he would not have gone to college at all without that assistance (conversation on 4/30/94).

³⁶ On her first expedition to the Upsala book room, the attending student informed her there were no more books. Bea complained to the manager and got her books. The other student "broke down" and they became friends (telephone conversation on 5/23/99).

she earned a master's degree from Montclair State Teachers College, where she felt well accepted in the classroom. But, according to a 1932 report, most institutions were not open to African Americans.

No Negroes attend Princeton University or the New Jersey College for Women [later called Douglass College of Rutgers University]. Rutgers University has had Negro students and graduates for a number of years, and some have made enviable records. Many students and teachers throughout the state attend the extension courses of this university. (Interracial Committee 40)

Among the black male alumni of Rutgers was Phi Beta Kappa graduate Paul Robeson, class of 1919, an acclaimed singer, actor, scholar, lawyer, linguist, athlete, and civil rights activist. In 1934, Julia Baxter, granddaughter of the last principal of the “colored school” in Newark, was admitted to the New Jersey College for Women and in 1938 graduated with general honors—the first African American alumna (M. Wright 206 footnote, officials at Rutgers³⁷). Myrdal confirmed in 1944 that Princeton still did not permit black students to enroll (1367 footnote 37).

New Jersey's racial conservatism was officially altered by 1945, when its Fair Employment Practices Act prohibited racial discrimination in employment and the Division Against Discrimination (DAD) was established to administer the act. In 1947, it became the first state to make *constitutional* provisions to outlaw racial segregation in the public schools, and the new state constitution was ratified overwhelmingly by voters (G. Wright 69-70, Price 1981 226). The next year, the DAD conducted a survey on behalf of the state Board of Education to determine the status of segregation in the public schools. The DAD encountered outright opposition to the termination of segregation in only four of the 52 school districts where it had been practiced. However, some of the other

³⁷ An official at Rutgers spoke with a white 1949 alumna on 2/25/99 who “said there had been a rumor (at some previous reunion) of a woman who claimed that her roommate was African American (but never told anyone).” The rumor cannot be substantiated, but is plausible given the benefits of “passing” in those days.

districts complied merely with the letter rather than the spirit of the law, resulting in the retention of black teachers with tenure and the release of all others. Those who were discharged were helped by the DAD to find other positions (M. Wright 1953 408-410, 413).

The absence of legal segregation did not necessarily ensure equality of opportunity for black and white youth. As indicated by the 1947 President's Commission on Higher Education, economic and social discrimination produced de facto segregation throughout the nation that often resulted in inferior school buildings, equipment, and teachers (G. Wright 34). Irvin Reid, who would become the second African American president of Montclair State in 1989, was number two in his 1959 graduating class of about 600 in Charleston, South Carolina. It had dawned on him that the education in his all-black school was not on a level with that provided in the city's white high school when he considered that used textbooks—which he was always given—must have been new textbooks for somebody else. Unlike most of his classmates, he was fortunate in coming from a home of teachers, preachers, books, and music that compensated for the lesser education in school and reflected: “I think I succeeded in spite of the schools.”³⁸

Nevertheless, Myrdal found that in the North, black teachers of black children were as well trained as teachers of white children and were not treated differently from their white colleagues in college classrooms—“except for a certain amount of social ostracism” (945-946). Historian Marion Thompson Wright observed that in New Jersey, “teachers and pupils of both races are working together in harmony” (1953 411). The

³⁸ Interview on 5/27/97.

new stand against school discrimination did not lead to the problems anticipated by skeptics.

It was alleged in the 1947 report of the President's Commission on Higher Education that, throughout the United States, many professional schools in particular maintained "a selective quota system for admission, under which the chance to learn, and thereby to become more useful citizens, [was] denied to certain minorities, particularly to Negroes and Jews" (35). The writers of the report denounced the lack of democracy inherent in the quota system.

As will be seen, some of the participants in this study asserted that Montclair State Teachers College had quotas for black students. Official written records neither validate nor repudiate that accusation. Devore found that in the reports of state normal school principals, "statistics related to enrollment give only the specifics as they relate to sex; race is omitted. This may be considered to be positive in that race appeared to be coincidental, but in practice it was a very significant variable" (Devore 221). Devore based her conclusion on interviews with black alumni.

It is true that the silences in official records can be as revealing as what is included. However, the personnel director at Montclair during the 1950s, who also served as head of admissions among other duties, emphatically denied the existence of a quota on African Americans at that time and was unaware of limits in earlier times. All prospective students were evaluated by rank in the high school class, scores on the state college entrance examination, interviews with the admissions office and the major department, and three letters of reference. Students were accepted in strict order according to the criteria above and the number of places available in their desired major (a number determined by the state budget office). Despite the subjectivity of in-person interviews—a potential stumbling block for any student if professors were inclined not to

admit them—he was adamant that Montclair faculty were looking only for the top people of any race. “We were color-blind then.”³⁹

During and after World War II, the black population of New Jersey grew quickly, increasing more than 40% from 1940 to 1950. The participation of African American soldiers in the war aided the effort to abolish discrimination at home, which was described by the Newark Teachers Union as “a contradiction of the very principles for which our nation is engaged in this long and bitter war” (Price 1981 223).

Concentrations of African Americans began to provide employment opportunities for black professionals in medicine, law, social work, and, to a limited extent, teaching (G. Wright 60). In 1946, Newark City Hospital finally appointed its first two black doctors (Price 1981 221-224). But a 1947 “Montclair Community Audit” revealed that, although African Americans were employed in municipal departments and there were a few black nurses at local hospitals, the town was a medical ghetto for black doctors and the jobs available in private business were mainly menial.⁴⁰

It seems appropriate that Montclair State was accredited by the American Association of University Women in 1945, following the war years when it had a virtually all-female student population. In the mid-1940s, the number of men jumped dramatically as former students returned from the military and others enrolled for the first time under the GI Bill. As indicated earlier, by 1947 half of all college students in the United States were veterans (West Group 158), and most of the veterans were male. In fact, not surprisingly, the first dean of men was appointed at Montclair in 1947.

³⁹ Telephone conversation on 1/22/00 with Earl Davis.

⁴⁰ Frances, a subject in this study, was the daughter of a black doctor. “It was only after the second world war that my dad [Dr. Arthur Thornhill] and Dr. Fred Douglas were given privileges at Mountainside” Hospital in Montclair.

President Sprague's 1947 annual report described the college's three major educational objectives for the period 1947 to 1950, the first of which was to provide educational opportunities for veterans.⁴¹ At MSTC, in 1947-48 the number of men (664) exceeded the number of women (663) for the first time (Sprague 1948 17). In 1954, male students were at 47% and male faculty at 64%.

After the war, new courses were offered and new organizations were formed, including those based on the needs of veterans (Veterans Club), an increased awareness of world and local obligations (Citizenship Committee), and the desire to "cancel Communist front conferences and stifle the display of Communistic literature" (Gettysburg Club). In 1948, courses in elementary education were returned to the curriculum for the first time since the normal school days to address a critical teacher shortage that was predicted to continue through at least the next five years as the baby boom accelerated. In place of free electives, all students were required to take basic courses in the theory and practice of teaching in the elementary schools (*Annual Report* 1948-49 4).

The facilities were still woefully inadequate. Thousands of prospective students were turned away due to space limitations despite the state's serious lack of teachers—not only in the elementary schools, but also in mathematics and science classrooms (*MT* 1/28/43, 10/28/48). The simple problem of space hampered the college in attaining one of its three main educational objectives for 1947-50: "to provide educational opportunities for veterans" (*Annual Report* 1950 2).

⁴¹ The other two goals were to meet teacher shortages and to maintain standards. According to Moe, a subject in this study, Sprague "didn't maintain standards at all. He raised them. He did something that no other president in New Jersey did. Maybe he was lucky because he was far enough away from Trenton so nobody bothered them. He hired good faculty. He couldn't pay them much money, but he gave them absolute freedom in the classroom and protected them."

With federal assistance, Sprague was able to breathe a bit of life into the building program that had been dormant since the start of the Depression. In addition to the WPA projects completed in the 1930s, the Federal Works Agency helped to provide several temporary “war asset” office and classroom buildings during the late 1940s. There were long waiting lists for housing, and part of one women’s dormitory, Chapin Hall, had been partitioned in the late 1930s to accommodate male as well as female residents.

The state and federal Public Housing Administrations and the state Board of Education alleviated the problem beginning in 1947 by constructing temporary men’s dormitories—dubbed Robert Hall, Alka Hall, and Dat’s Hall—and College Heights, a village of 16 veterans’ housing buildings with apartments for 39 families that included 25 children, 11 dogs, and two television sets (*Annual Report* 1947 4, *Catalog* 1948-50 16-17, *La Campana* 1948 17, *La Campana* 1949 69). A small stone recreation building was completed through the joint efforts of college administrators and the Student Government Association in late 1947 (*Annual Report* 1947 3).

In the spring of 1946, Sprague served as one of 12 members of the National Committee on Educational Rehabilitation in the War Devastated Countries. In 1949, he coordinated a visit by 30 high-ranking German educators to MSTC as well as to 56 other colleges and universities throughout the country so they could study American teacher training and implement more democratic methods in their home country. That fall, MSTC welcomed one of 50 Japanese students selected by US occupational forces to study for one year in the United States; he was a professor of education in Japan and lived in a campus dormitory at Montclair (*MT* 4/25/46, 3/31/49, 12/1/49). Students had opportunities to learn about tolerance and reconciliation in a democracy from the involvement of their president and interaction with guests from former “enemy”

countries. It is likely that these influences were significant in developing the interest of white students in understanding and resolving racial issues.

The time was ripe for definitive action at Montclair State Teachers College. In 1946, the first African American pupil was admitted to College High School (Frances, a subject in this study) and the first black student lived in Russ Hall. In the fall of 1933, Katherine Bell, an African American student whose complexion was so fair she was often considered white, had lived in Chapin Hall for one semester. Her story will be told in Chapter V. With that one exception, no black students are known to have lived on campus until the fall of 1946 when Ophelia Bland, a freshman who allegedly had not submitted a photograph with her application, was assigned to live in Russ Hall. To the apparent dismay of the administration upon her arrival, the student was African American.⁴² The unwritten regulation that had kept black students out of campus housing seemed to be understood by the black alumni who were interviewed for this study, although Ophelia could not be located to discover her thoughts when applying to live in the dormitory.

Ophelia's arrival seemed to have caused an awkward moment, which was resolved by not assigning her to room with any other (white) student. Instead, she was tucked away by herself in a tiny room, the only student living on the housemother's floor in Russ Hall.⁴³ Jean Simmerlein was a white resident. For reasons unknown to her (but perhaps because she was active in the Intercultural Relations Group), the dean of women asked if she and her roommate would triple with Ophelia the following semester. "It was

⁴² A similar incident occurred at Harvard in the fall of 1921. Three new black students requested dormitory residence. Only one was successful because his application was not made in person and evidently the administration did not know he was black (Sollors 212).

⁴³ In 1940, room 101 on the first floor of Russ Hall had been established as a guest room (*Annual Report* 1940-41 62). That room is likely the one assigned to Ophelia.

a casual thing with no great import attached to it. . . . Of course there was no question and we were pleased that she was willing to room with us.” They enjoyed their time as a threesome—a common arrangement given the scarcity of residence facilities.⁴⁴ When I asked Jean to recall how Ophelia felt about her initial experience, she replied: “It was so dreadful, we never discussed it.” Ophelia apparently lived at home for some time after that, but returned as a junior to live in Chapin Hall and then was absent again in her senior year. Her 1950 yearbook photo is accompanied by the question: “Dorm student or commuter?” The reasons for her seesaw living arrangements are unknown, but she did open the door for other African Americans to live on campus.

Although racial data are not included in any existing student records (except an occasional photograph on a transcript), for a time the college did request racial identification on practice teaching application forms for the “benefit” of the receiving schools, according to an undated article reportedly from a Newark newspaper printed about the spring of 1948. Students “defended the college’s interracial record” to the reporter, but they “objected strongly to prejudice displayed by some schools in choosing teachers. They said this condition resulted in placing the questions on the [application] blank.”

The editor of the *Montclarion*, Jean Simmerlein (who provided a copy of the article), noted that indicating one’s Italian or Irish descent also “would have been a barrier to placement in some school districts” (personal letter from 8/25/96). She was quoted in the newspaper article as follows: “The type of ‘quality’ which school administrators are seeking can be found by examining students’ records and through

⁴⁴ It is unclear whether Ophelia lived with Jean and her roommate during her freshman or sophomore year. Jean did recall that her original roommate’s only misgiving was caused by leaving their friends on the second floor and moving to a larger room on the third floor to accommodate the tripling.

personal interviews—not by examining their antecedents.” A visiting dean from historically black Lincoln University was quoted as justifying the college’s gathering of such information “anonymously for use in interpreting composition of the student body but for the purpose of placements it might well be considered undemocratic.” The visitor then praised the college’s work in constructive interracial relations. The article states that President Sprague “ordered the inquiries removed from the blanks.” Those old forms cannot be located.⁴⁵ Further investigation failed to find any other records on racial demographics, racial guidelines for admission, and so on.

In 1948 there was a change in the accrediting body for teacher education. The American Association of Teachers Colleges joined with other organizations to form the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education. The accrediting function of the AATC was taken over by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, which accredited Montclair for the first time in 1954.

Another change was the establishment of the New Jersey School of Conservation in Stokes State Forest in 1949 through the initiative of the state Department of Education and under the direction of Ernest DeAlton Partridge, dean of instruction at MSTC. The site was a children’s camp, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps and unused for two years. In its new life, it flourished as an outdoor educational facility for students from all the state teachers colleges and many other schools as well. From 1957 to 1967, students from all six state teachers colleges were required to participate in a five-day overnight camping experience at the School of Conservation (Partridge 1983 38, *Annual Report*

⁴⁵ A campus maintenance foreman asserted that numerous forgotten files stored in the attic of the main administration building had been thrown into a dumpster in the 1980s to make way for air-conditioning ducts. Fortunately, a great deal of information had been documented in a 1954 New York University doctoral dissertation by Earl Davis, “The Origin and Development of the New Jersey State Teachers College at Montclair, 1908-1951.”

1949 20, personal conversation with current director). Today, it is a department of the College of Science and Mathematics at Montclair State University and is the largest university-operated residential environmental center in the world. Black and white students have lived and studied together in the rustic environment since it was opened.

On the national level, President Truman—in addition to providing the catalyst for unprecedented numbers of black (and other) Americans to pursue higher education through the GI Bill—endorsed the recommendations of the 1947 Committee on Civil Rights and included a strong civil rights plank in his party's political platform. In 1948, he ordered an end to segregation in federal housing, civil service, and the military (Chase 56). The Supreme Court ruled that same year in *Sipuel v. Board of Regents of University of Oklahoma* that states could not use race as a criterion in judging law school applicants. Such use had resulted in the nonadmission of black students.⁴⁶ Although Montclair, of course, did not have a law school, students were aware of this and other race-related rulings that indicated progress toward full civil rights for all citizens.

In 1950, Senator Joseph McCarthy initiated an anti-communist discourse, setting off a wave of national hysteria that would reach Montclair State the following year (see next section). In June of 1950, the United States government decided to provide military and economic aid to the Republic of Korea in the face of a communist attack from North Korea. The Montclair State community continued its international involvement and interest as male students and faculty members served in the military once again. When the Korean conflict ended in 1953, veterans received benefits similar to those afforded earlier servicemen and women, which included higher education.

⁴⁶ Curiously, in later years prospective white students complained that the use of race as a criterion produced exactly the opposite result.

Montclair's President Sprague turned 65 in 1951 and was forced by state policy to retire. At his last faculty meeting, Sprague echoed Principal Chapin's stance against uniformity by making a statement recalled by a faculty member as follows: "The state Board of Education is now calling for a curriculum revision on all state college campuses. This is an attempt at uniformity. But Montclair has always been different, and I hope you will keep it that way" (Pettegrove 1983 12). Sprague then became the first dean of graduate studies at Fairleigh Dickinson University, a nearby private institution. The president of FDU wrote many years later upon Sprague's death at age 91: "What Woodrow Wilson was to Princeton, Harry Sprague was to higher education in this state" (*Herald-News* 4/27/77). Howard Fehr of Teachers College at Columbia University (formerly on the MSTC faculty) rated Montclair State under Sprague as the best teachers college in the country (Raichle 372). Partridge, the dean of instruction, wrote that Sprague "was so gentle and soft spoken that no one would suspect him of being an innovator, but he was, because he built an outstanding college and never ran afoul of the establishment" (Partridge 1983 91).

Sprague to Partridge (1951 to 1958)

An alternate title for this section could be "Expansion." The next president was a big man whose ambitions for the college matched his physical stature. Buildings and programs and the student population all expanded greatly under the leadership of Montclair's new maverick president. Throughout the country, strides toward racial justice were expansive as well. Major legal decisions affected the daily lives and interactions of Americans at all levels, including on college campuses.

Dean of instruction E. DeAlton Partridge, who had not believed it appropriate to submit his name as a candidate for the soon-to-be-vacant presidential position,

remembered learning either from the radio or from someone coming into his office that he had been appointed the new leader of Montclair State. There also was an announcement in that evening's paper, but no discussion with Partridge and no inauguration ceremony, which he took as indicators that state officials considered the event on a par with the appointment of a high school principal (Partridge 1983 51-52). Unlike Sprague, Partridge "ran afoul of the establishment" repeatedly. But after his own departure in 1964, he would be credited by the *New York Times* with making Montclair the "showcase" of New Jersey's six state colleges (12/5/65 87A).

The new president had earned his BS degree at Brigham Young University, followed by graduate work at New York University and a PhD from Teachers College at Columbia University. Like Sprague in relation to Chapin, Partridge was a generation younger than his predecessor. He was 45 years old when Sprague's mantle of nonuniformity fell upon his shoulders. While the state commissioner of education attempted to facilitate a curriculum revision to bring all six teachers colleges into conformity, Partridge continued introducing original content into the Montclair curriculum. The commissioner often demanded of Partridge: "Why does Montclair always want to be different?" The president always responded: "Because Montclair *is* different" (Pettegrove 1983 13).

Almost immediately, President Partridge faced a crisis when the state Chamber of Commerce recommended closing the Montclair and Newark teachers college campuses and building a new facility in the Elizabeth area (*NEN* 2/26/52, Partridge 1980). Partridge felt betrayed upon discovering that the report was written by two MSTC

graduates.⁴⁷ Following vigorous protest by the united college community, the town of Montclair, and other groups, the governor rejected the idea.

The president also had to deal with a faculty member who came from Germany and (in Partridge's words) "did not know the difference between a liberal, a socialist and a communist." The professor, Felix Wittmer, was an avid fan of Senator Joseph McCarthy and recruited students to spy on other faculty members. His vocal and written belief that there were communists on campus led some local sympathizers to refer to the college as "The Little Red Schoolhouse on the Hill." Wittmer was unpopular with many students, but praised by others. He resigned in 1951 due to the communism controversy (MT 3/12/53, Partridge 1983 67-68, Davis conversation 1/22/00).

Partridge's greatest legacy was his success, against enormous odds, in leading the fight to secure bond funding for new buildings at the six state teachers colleges. In spite of desperate facilities needs, voters had rejected a bond issue for all state institutions in 1949. The next year, Sprague had initiated another bond issue for the six state colleges alone. His legislative ally was Grace Freeman, a Montclair alumna who was a state assemblywoman and introduced the bill. At the same time, *Life Magazine* was preparing a special edition on public schooling, including an article on the nation's teachers colleges. *Life* editors had no trouble finding examples of poor colleges, but wanted to include a good one also. Officials at Columbia University's Teachers College directed them across the river to Montclair.

⁴⁷ In a personal interview on 4/30/94, Steven Schanes '43, one of the authors, stated that the two alumni had seen it not as a proposal but rather as a "what if" project assigned by their boss: "Assuming MSTC and one other college closed, how would it affect the remaining four colleges?" In fact, Mr. Schanes was placed on the Alumni Association board to help fight this very idea after he and James McGrew wrote the document.

As dean of instruction, Partridge was leading the campaign for the new bond issue and worked with *Life* officials to prepare the article. The resulting story, referring to Montclair as a good college with appalling facilities and accompanied by dramatic photos, appeared on October 16, 1950. In a building designed for 250-350 students (the number varies in different documents), the returning veterans had swollen enrollment to about 1,100, forcing the overcrowding of all classes and the scheduling of some in the evenings and on weekends (*MT* 9/19/08, 8/22/46). The *Life* article drummed up the public indignation needed to pass the new bond issue in November 1951, during Partridge's presidency.

MSTC was allocated the largest portion of the funding and several buildings were erected in the 1950s (Partridge 1983 48-51). These included the first permanent men's dormitory, John Stone Hall, named for the nationally known mathematician and early Montclair State Normal School professor; a classroom building, Charles Finley Hall, named for a retired dean of instruction and professor of biology; Lillian Gilbreth Home Management House, named for the famed engineer and mother of 12 whose family life in Montclair was chronicled in the best-selling *Cheaper by the Dozen*; a gymnasium, auditorium, student center, and cafeteria. The latter two facilities were part of a complex named Life Hall—to honor the members of the campus community who gave their *lives* during the war, to recognize the building's use as a center for student *life*, and to give tribute to *Life Magazine*, whose national support at a critical juncture ensured passage of the facilities bond issue.

Partridge was instrumental in securing grants and other private funding, both as dean and as president. For example, the Alfred Sloan Foundation awarded \$156,000 over two years for the New Tools in Learning Bureau (*MT* 8/12/48). Partridge no doubt had cultivated a relationship with Alfred Sloan's brother Harold, who had left the MSTC

faculty in 1936 (the year before Partridge arrived) to serve as vice president and executive director of the Sloan Foundation until 1944. Partridge also spearheaded one of the nation's first campaigns to secure private contributions for a public college building—in this case, as noted above, the student center that was not part of the bond funding (*MT* 1/23/64).

Partridge continued a project initiated by Sprague in leading the college's pioneering work in the use of educational television. He had financial and technical assistance from Allen DuMont, a Montclair resident who was president of the DuMont Television Laboratories (Conrad 7-8, Davis 152), and the intense involvement of MSTC students. The first full day of instruction was broadcast in the spring of 1952 to 13 local schools under the watchful eye of reporters from the major metropolitan newspapers, one of whom likened the event to the historic flight of the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk. The bureaucracy in Trenton refused to endorse further experimentation (Partridge 1983 58-59). In 1954, the Ford Foundation and the Radio-Electronics-Television Manufacturers Association pledged \$1,470,000 to MSTC to undertake a revolutionary study of educational television possibilities. Partridge could neither comment on nor accept the grant because it had not been cleared by state authorities—and the commissioner of education did not like the Ford Foundation (*NEN* 2/28/54, Partridge 1983 74). Nevertheless, students formed a Television Club and continued their work. Television sets—including color—quickly proliferated in American homes, growing from approximately 1.5 million in 1950 to 29 million in 1954.

In the summer of 1952, Montclair's international involvement continued as more than 100 students from throughout the country participated in a three-day United Nations Institute on campus (*MT* 7/10/52). That fall, Dwight Eisenhower, a war general, was elected president of the United States. In 1953, the Board of Education began requiring

that all state teachers college seniors take the National Teachers Examination. The scores for each of the six institutions were higher than the national average. However, Montclair students “exceeded all the other five colleges, and the national average, by a statistically significant margin” (Davis 169). The Montclair score was about 80 points above the national average. By comparison, Trenton—the only other state college offering secondary teacher training at that time—was just about 57 points over the average, and the other four fell between Trenton and the national average (Davis 169, 185).

Part of the reason for the high achievement of Montclair students on the national tests was the initial selectivity in admission, although the outstanding faculty was credited as well (Partridge 1983 52, 63). *Life Magazine* had noted in 1950 that more than 50 textbooks written by MSTC faculty members were in standard use throughout the United States (10/16/50 146). One of the subjects of this study, who later became a faculty member and administrator at Montclair, recalled that some professors earned up to 10 times their teaching salary from textbook royalties (McGee telephone conversation).

President Sprague had persuaded distinguished scholars to join the faculty. At one time there were four Rhodes Scholars among the 35 faculty members, including three in the English Department alone⁴⁸ (*Life* 10/16/50 146, McGee 8). Under Partridge, the faculty maintained the top rating in the country given by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, ranking higher than 97% of the undergraduate faculties

⁴⁸ Paul Hamilton, Russell Krauss, and James Pettegrove were in the English Department; Mowat Fraser was in the Integration Department. According to Moe McGee (alumnus 1949, faculty member 1958-90, and interviewee for this study), while Krauss was at Oxford University he befriended J. R. R. Tolkien and tutored him in Anglo-Saxon. Tolkien tutored Krauss in Middle English.

and higher than 94% of the graduate faculties among the Association's membership (*MT* 7/9/53). The college continued to expand its curricular offerings and added three new majors in fine arts, home economics, and industrial arts.

Enrollment of African American students at Montclair increased during the 1950s and employment opportunities began to expand for black high school teachers in the northern part of the state. In 1945 there were only four such teachers, and by 1952 there were 29. That year an African American—James Parker of Red Bank, a trustee of Howard University—was appointed to the state Board of Education (M. Wright 1953 412-415). Wright observed that

legislation accompanied by educational techniques designed to influence the attitudes of men [had] achieved results without the friction or riots predicted by those who fear change in controversial areas. People have a right to their prejudices. New Jersey says that they do not have the right to express their prejudices in overt actions which are injurious to the welfare of others. (1953 416)

Indeed, the 1950s were a time of change for African Americans throughout the country. In 1950, Gwendolyn Brooks was the first black female poet to receive a Pulitzer Prize and Ralph Bunche, grandson of a slave, was the first African American to win the Nobel Peace Prize (for mediating conflict between Jews and Arabs in Palestine). In 1957, Althea Gibson was the first African American to win a tennis championship at Wimbledon.

Records kept by Tuskegee Institute over seven decades showed that 1952 was the first year in which no lynchings were reported in the nation, paralleling a decline in the membership and popularity of the Ku Klux Klan. Nevertheless, the National Guard had been called to a Chicago suburb in 1951 when riots erupted over a black family moving in. It also should be noted that a few years later, in 1957, the KKK condescended to open

its membership to Roman Catholics as Supreme Court decisions unpopular with white supremacists of all religions led to its revival.

In 1956, Elvis Presley, “a white man who performed with the abandon of the best black stars” (Daniel 772), rose to fame following a television appearance on the Ed Sullivan Show. His celebrity was especially significant because he opened the door for white musicians to play in the black style, contributing greatly to an intercultural acceptance that extended beyond the world of music. In 1957, the first black band played at the Waldorf-Astoria Hotel in New York City, led by Count Basie (who received an honorary degree from Montclair State in 1982). Black and white musical tastes were melding.

Lawyers were kept busy in the fight for racial equality. Continuing its legal strategy, the NAACP in 1950 initiated a large-scale effort to abolish educational segregation. That same year, the Supreme Court upheld a black student’s right to attend the University of Texas law school instead of a hastily-established black law school (*Sweatt v. Painter*). On the same day, in *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents*, the Court ordered an end to the practice of segregating African American students once they were enrolled. In the latter case, a black student who had been admitted by Court order to the University of Oklahoma to pursue a doctorate in education was assigned separate seating in the classroom, library, and cafeteria. In an opinion written by the Chief Justice, the Court ruled that students of all races must receive the same treatment at the hands of the state. In 1951, the University of North Carolina admitted its first black student. In 1953, the Supreme Court ruled that restaurants in the nation’s capital could not refuse to serve black customers. In 1956, racial segregation on interstate trains and buses, and in their waiting rooms, was terminated.

Perhaps the best-known decision of the Court was in *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*. Oliver Brown, a black welder in Kansas, sued the Topeka Board of Education after being forced to send his little daughter to a black school instead of the closer white school (Jennings 352). The Supreme Court decision in 1954 unequivocally outlawed segregated public schools. In the preface to the 1962 edition of sociologist Gunnar Myrdal's important book, *An American Dilemma*, the *Brown* decision was pinpointed as the historical moment that led to concerted resistance to changes in the American racial caste system (xxxvi). A hundred Congressmen issued a southern manifesto in 1956 decrying the Supreme Court and encouraging state resistance to forced integration (Chase 57). Sadly, as Myrdal observed, the ideology of racism perpetuated by the South was not even a response any longer to "a conflict between economic-political forces and the idealism of the American Creed," which was reprehensible yet understandable; it was rather "an expression merely of a traditional psychology" (Myrdal xxxvi).

The 1954 *Brown* victory sparked additional strides toward justice. In 1955, Rosa Parks was arrested for refusing to give up her seat to a white man on a Montgomery, Alabama bus. Pastor Martin Luther King was chosen to head the publicity campaign that led to a successful bus boycott by blacks, who constituted 75% of the riders. In the face of bombing, stabbing, and other violence, King and his interracial Southern Christian Leadership Conference pressed ahead with their agenda for nonviolent relief from inequality.⁴⁹ In New Jersey, the Manual Training and Industrial School for Colored Youth was closed in 1955, the year after the *Brown* decision. In addition to that prompt

⁴⁹ Another of the group's three leaders was Bayard Rustin, who received an honorary degree from Montclair State in 1968.

from the Supreme Court, the curriculum had not progressed with the times; it had continued offering training in traditional trades without responding to developing technology and new opportunities for African Americans (Devore 215, 219).

Other important steps on the road to equity were the Supreme Court's 1956 ruling in *Florida ex rel. Hawkins v. Board of Control* that professional programs must integrate without delay—unlike the precollegiate schools that only had to use “all deliberate speed”—and Autherine Lucy's enrollment by Court order at the University of Alabama a few days later. Despite fierce opposition from the governor of Arkansas, Central High School in Little Rock was integrated later that year by nine black students with assistance from 1,000 paratroopers and 10,000 National Guardsmen. The following year, about a million American student days were lost when schools were closed in a vain attempt to prevent integration. But no amount of resistance could stop the force of the budding civil rights movement. Although teaching opportunities would be lessened, other employment options would improve considerably for African Americans.

Montclair students were aware of the momentous 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education* case as well as other victories in the battle for civil rights. A 1956 *Montclarion* praised the *Brown* decision in an editorial and in the same issue reported on students' reactions to the activity surrounding the integration of Central High School in Little Rock. The small sampling revealed three students adamantly opposed to the governor's fierce segregationist actions and two students advocating nonintervention in the affairs of the South (*Montclarion* 9/30/58).

In 1956, President Eisenhower proposed a Civil Rights Act, including the creation of the Commission on Civil Rights. He was reelected president that year and the Senate approved the Civil Rights Act in 1957 despite opposition from Strom Thurmond of South Carolina, who railed against the proposal for more than 24 hours in a Senate

filibuster. At Montclair, 1957 marked the highest number of known African American graduates (seven) in the school's history for any given year. Two years later, there were twice that number. In fact, black graduates increased 300% from the decade of the 1940s to the decade of the 1950s.

Creating a student group that would focus largely on issues related to African Americans seemed to present a much higher stumbling block at Montclair State than did dormitory integration 12 years earlier. When a campus chapter of the NAACP was proposed in 1958, a raging storm ensued in the pages of the *Montclarion*. At the special Student Government Association (SGA) meeting called to vote on the new group, white students were suspicious of its name and purposes. Would people think there was a racial problem at Montclair State? Would the members have divided loyalties between campus policy and national NAACP policy?

Won't it mean a greater focus on the Negro race?
 Would it appear that MSC endorsed NAACP?
 Can't some other group on campus accomplish this same end?
 Will all speakers speak on the advancement of colored people?
 NAACP is political as can be seen in their strong lobby in Washington.
 [Answer: So is the National Education Association.]
 Suppose the National Association for the Advancement of White People was organized on campus. Would you accept this?
 What will NAACP do for MSC?

Following discussion, the petition was defeated by the SGA with a vote of 1-14-1. The SGA then issued a statement that it would accept the group if the name were changed. The controversy continued in the pages of the newspaper (*Montclarion* 10/14/58, 10/21/58, 11/4/58, 11/18/58).

The year of the NAACP debate was also the year Montclair State's first black professor was hired, according to retired Dean Philip Cohen. Mary Cowan, the wife of a prominent Montclair physician, James Rankin Cowan, taught social studies from 1958 until 1962. Her husband later became the first African American in the United States

appointed to a governor's cabinet as commissioner of health, a post he held in New Jersey from 1970 to 1974 (Smith 137). But teaching at the college "was not a happy experience for her," according to the dean, although he could not elaborate on the reasons.

From a distance, citizens of the United States during the 1950s could be viewed as a group of "happy campers" who enjoyed dramatic improvement in the quality of life on many fronts. Closer inspection, however, would reveal that some people still were not allowed into the "camp." The following quote from John Hope Franklin (1988 376) sums up the racial situation in the country as a whole during the period under study: "In a nation dedicated to the idea of the essential equality of mankind . . . the existence of a separate Negro community constituted one of the remarkable social anomalies of the twentieth century."

Partridge to the Present

A summary of major changes at Montclair State in the years following the period of this study will provide a glimpse at the results of the foundation laid by Chapin, Sprague, and Partridge.

Effective July 1958, all six New Jersey teacher training institutions, including Montclair, were renamed as state colleges, dropping the "teachers" designation. In a resolution approved on March 5, 1958, the state Board of Education cited as its reason for this action the fact that 27 other states had already renamed their teachers colleges. Apparently, the Board members had resolved not to be at the end of the line on this educational issue as New Jersey had been in other areas such as funding. One month later, Panzer College of Physical Education and Hygiene, located in East Orange, used the "if you can't beat 'em, join 'em" philosophy and merged with MSC due to "the

coming competition of Montclair State College” with its physical education program (Wacker 375). The 1958-59 year also marked Montclair’s 50th anniversary, which was celebrated with special events that included the awarding of the first honorary degree by a New Jersey state college⁵⁰ (*Annual Report 1959 7*).

James B. Conant, former president of Harvard University, visited Montclair State twice in the early 1960s and several faculty members recall that he referred to it as the “Harvard of teachers colleges” (Becker 2). The second black professor, Vernon Williams, was hired in 1961 and taught mathematics until 1969. During that time, at least five⁵¹ additional African Americans joined the faculty: Jeannine Barrett in English (1964 to 1988), Thomas Millard in sociology and counseling (1965 to the present), Percy Johnston in English (1968 to 1982), Daniel Williams in psychology (1969 to 1998), and Richard Grey in the Teacher Corps program and then in counseling (1969 to the present). Dean Cohen recalled that a white faculty member taught black history in the 1960s.

Beginning in that decade, several programs were established at Montclair specifically for the recruitment of African American students who wished to become teachers and for the preparation of all students to work in urban schools. Some were federally funded, such as Project TRY (Talent Research for Youth), and others were local, such as the Urban Institute and modified admissions procedures. There has been extensive collaborative work with the Newark city school system in particular, including on-campus programs at Montclair for pupils beginning in the fifth grade; establishment of

⁵⁰ The first honorary degree was awarded to Dr. John Bosshart, former state commissioner of education, on 10/23/58.

⁵¹ Dr. Millard recalled that another black faculty member spent one semester at Montclair before resigning to return to the black college where he had taught previously, citing his discomfort at MSC.

Future Teachers of Newark clubs in the high schools; scholarships for minority students pursuing teacher education; and graduate programs for in-service teachers.

When President Partridge took a leave of absence in 1964, Thomas Henry Richardson, dean of the college, became the acting president and then the permanent president upon Partridge's resignation two years later. That same year, 1966, Montclair and its five sister colleges were recognized as comprehensive institutions of higher education and began to offer nonteaching liberal arts programs. For the first time, a small number of freshmen were admitted to the six state colleges without being required to sign a pledge to become teachers. President Richardson was succeeded in 1973 by David Watson Daly Dickson, the first black president of any New Jersey state college.⁵²

In his memoirs, President Dickson wrote that the chancellor of higher education in New Jersey was concerned about Montclair's limited black enrollment in the late 1970s when it was no longer a teachers college. Dickson speculated that the college's "high entrance requirements and its primary emphasis on liberal rather than practical learning had traditionally not appealed to students of moderate means who desired clear and immediate remunerative positions on graduation" (95-96). He was succeeded by Donald Eugene Walters in 1984 and the percentage of black students began to increase. Walters' tenure was cut tragically short when he developed terminal brain cancer. The newly appointed vice president for academic affairs, Richard Arthur Lynde, served as interim president from 1987 to 1989.

Montclair's second black president, Irvin Dexter Reid, arrived in 1989. In 1991, the college's commitment to partnership with Newark and other urban schools earned

⁵² The second and third black state college presidents were hired in 1982 at Glassboro State College (now Rowan University) and Thomas Edison State College. The fourth was hired in 1983 at Stockton State College (now Richard Stockton College of New Jersey).

Montclair a place as one of only eight pilot sites for the prestigious National Network for Educational Renewal (NNER) under the leadership of John Goodlad. President Reid, with a zeal for Montclair similar to that of Sprague and Partridge, lobbied successfully to have Montclair's achievements and extensive curricular offerings recognized through designation as a university in 1994—the first of the six former normal schools to be so designated by the state.

Two years later, the university was accepted as a member of the Holmes Partnership, a select association of research universities involved in the renewal of teacher education. The following year, MSU was cited by the Terrel Bell Knowledge Network for Education Reform for “best practice” in the area of university/school partnerships (Lloyd et al. 253-254), and in 1998, the dean of MSU's College of Education and Human Services was elected the first chair of the reorganized NNER. Also in 1998, shortly after Susan Ablon Cole succeeded President Reid, MSU obtained approval to offer its first doctoral degree (in pedagogy). In 1999, the university established a new postbaccalaureate program designed to attract highly competent minority graduates of mathematics and science programs into high-need urban secondary school teaching.

Despite New Jersey's inadequacies in support for higher education, Montclair State long has been in the national forefront of teacher education innovation and recognition. But improvement is still needed in attracting black students into the teaching profession. In the 10 years from 1990 through 1999, only 4.0% (65) of the undergraduate students who received teacher certification identified themselves as African American.⁵³

⁵³ Of the 1,627 certification recipients, 3.0% or 49 did not identify their race/ethnicity at all. However, given the incentives for African Americans to identify themselves—such as affirmative action programs and financial aid in various forms—it is unlikely that many, if any, of the 49 were black.

Although the figures are small, there has been a generally upward trend during the 10 years in both the number and percentage of black undergraduate students who choose teaching as a career—from 2.5% (3) in 1990 to 7.7% (15) in 1998. In 1999, the number dropped back to 4.4% (8). The dean of the College of Education and Human Services considered the one-year decrease an anomaly because many prospective black teachers were in the “pipeline.”⁵⁴ During the decade, 18 additional African Americans received initial teacher certification as postbaccalaureate students. The special recruitment and partnership efforts may be bearing some fruit.

Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the “past imperfect”—the historical events that affected the development of Montclair State Teachers College during the period 1927 through 1957. Also included are events that occurred prior to and following this period when relevant to a more complete understanding. Thus, a snapshot has been presented of the setting of the lives of the participants in this study. The next chapter offers a conceptual framework for understanding the impact of those historical events on these students through a review of major literary and research works.

⁵⁴ Conversation with Dean Nicholas Michelli on 2/1/00.

CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Introduction

The previous chapter described the development of Montclair State Teachers College in the larger context of world, national, and local events prior to, during, and immediately after the period 1927 through 1957. This chapter reviews the major research that contributed to a conceptual or theoretical framework for considering how that development both affected and was influenced by the African American students who were preparing to become teachers. The principal concepts constituting the theoretical framework are racism, status attainment, community, integration (academic and social), and persistence/retention.

The theoretical underpinnings are drawn largely from Vincent Tinto's 1987 work, revised in 1993, titled *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*. Tinto emerged in the 1980s as the preeminent thinker in uncovering the reasons for college student retention and attrition. His work has been referenced, refuted, and relied upon by other researchers and practitioners throughout the nation.

My interview questions were based on the elements Tinto identified as having a major impact on retention—namely, the character of a student's education and the environment supporting that education (Tinto 1993 3-4). Although no single theory can account for all the factors involved in an African American student's decision and/or opportunity to enroll in a teachers college, complete the degree, and obtain a teaching position, Tinto's work does provide an effective instrument for analyzing those decisions

and experiences. His research formed the foundation upon which the interview questions were set, but other scholars also influenced the structure. An examination of the concepts of racism, status attainment, community, integration (academic and social), and persistence/retention follows. They are conceptually distinct, and yet they are also interdependent. An attempt is made to review them as separately as possible for clarity.

Racism

Racism is a malignancy that has sickened societies throughout history, and the United States has not escaped its effects. Clearly, any discussion of the experiences of African Americans must consider the legacy and the present reality of racism. The specific aspects of racism related to this study involve its effects on the accessibility and quality of early education, of teacher education, and of teaching careers for African Americans. The principal researchers whom I consulted in the area of racism and education were James D. Anderson 1988 (*Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935*), Gunnar Myrdal 1944 (*An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*), E. Franklin Frazier 1957 (*The Negro in the United States*), and Marion Thompson Wright 1941 (*The Education of Negroes in New Jersey*). These particular authors were selected from a vast literature on racial issues for reasons that include their stature within the scholarly community, the periods of time they studied, their special attention to educational concerns, and the applicability of their work to New Jersey.

The concept of racism in the early nineteenth century was an offshoot of nationalism—loyalty to one's own group (in terms of common culture, language, territory, purpose, etc.) as opposed to other groups. At that time, emphasis was placed on the development of individual cultures. Simultaneously, scientific research was documenting the existence of races distinguished by physical characteristics. In the

process, culture and intellect came to be associated with race, leading many to the assumption of white racial superiority. Advances in anthropology discredited racism as a tenable intellectual doctrine, although its effects remain obvious (*Webster Encyclopedia*).

Racism is defined today as “the determination of actions, attitudes, or policies by beliefs about racial characteristics . . . which seek to explain and justify social inequality based on race” (*Dictionary of Sociology*). It also can be defined as “the unequal treatment of a population group purely because of its possession of physical or other characteristics socially defined as denoting a particular race,” leading to a belief system that “links these characteristics with negatively valuated social, psychological, or physical traits” (*Concise Oxford Dictionary of Sociology*). Racism can be overt and individual—one individual’s acts of oppression against other persons or groups—or covert and institutional. The latter type involves

structural relationships of subordination and oppression between social groups. While individual racism consists of intended actions, institutional racism involves the unintended consequences of a system of racial inequality. (*Dictionary of Sociology*)

Racism also can be seen in the assignment of identity to others, placing them outside one’s circle in order to legitimize one’s own status identity in opposition to “them.”

As a historically constructed concept, racism has other connotations today than it did 50 years ago (or in any given age). It means different things to the same people over time and different things to different people at the same time. For example, Spitzberg and Thorndike discovered in their research on college campuses that “to some extent, racism is in the eye of the beholder. We found frequent, and occasionally angry, disagreement about what constitutes racist behavior” (37). It is safe to conclude that, whatever the particular expression of racism perceived by an individual, it constitutes a

behavior or speech or attitude that is negative toward someone of a race that is not the perpetrator's own merely because of the racial difference.

It is apparent from the work of all four researchers noted above as well as countless others that many African American parents, even in the days of slavery, understood the value of learning and were determined that their children be educated. But an educated group of laborers was worrisome for owners or employers whose purposes were served better by illiterate people with few work options. Anderson pointed out that white suppression of black literacy revealed the masters' respect for the capacity of African Americans to learn (281-282). As the masters increased their attempts to repress literacy, the oppressed strengthened their resolve to become educated.

A careful examination of blacks' enduring beliefs in education and their historic struggle to acquire decent educational opportunities against almost overwhelming odds leaves little room to attribute their relatively low levels of educational attainment to uncongenial cultural values or educational norms. (Anderson 285)

Frederick Douglass wrote with fervor about his determination to become educated once he realized it was his most effective weapon in the battle for freedom from his life of slavery. When the wife of his master, inexperienced in slave-owning, taught him to read a little, his hunger increased. "I have observed this in my experience of slavery—that whenever my condition was improved, instead of its increasing my contentment, it only increased my desire to be free, and set me to thinking of plans to gain my freedom" (133).

In the view of Jencks and Riesman, minorities have a tendency to accept virtually all the assumptions and aspirations of their oppressors, except the rejection of themselves (292). If that is so, they would accept not only the value of basic education, but also the white academic aspiration of college graduation and the white hierarchy of value among colleges. Therefore, black integration into white colleges—especially the most

prestigious ones—would provide the greatest assurance of true equality. That integration, of course, was elusive and stifled even at the precollegiate level. Furthermore, there has not been agreement among African Americans in this regard. In addition to a black defense of segregated childhood education, as noted in Chapter II, William McClendon—winner of the NAACP essay contest in 1934 and a student at Morehouse College in Atlanta—wrote:

Without hesitation and apology I answer that I believe the Negro college will be the saving grace of the Negro race until the fundamental attitude of the white man toward the Negro makes a radical change. The white college, until that time, can never prepare the young Negro for life. (Wilson 90)

Yet David Dickson, who would later become Montclair’s first African American president, was vice president at the newly established predominantly black Federal City College in Washington, DC in 1968. The college was riddled with racial problems and Dickson concluded that “instead of being the leaven in the American interracial lump we have become lumpish, more the microcosm of an unhappy macrocosm than heralds of a better one world” (109).

Robin Kelley, in his 1994 book *Race Rebels*, challenged the assumption that African Americans blindly accepted the aspirations of the majority culture. In “the cracks of political history—spaces as diverse as barber shops, bars, and benevolent societies”—blacks shaped their own culture. “Individual and collective experiences, grievances, and dreams were talked about and reflected upon in the hidden social spaces.” Rather than “implicitly adopting the American faith in hard work and individual effort,” they were working out their own methods for recreating and reinforcing a sense of collective identity (52-53). Nevertheless, education in some institution remained a priority for many African American families.

Anderson's research documented elementary and secondary educational opportunities for southern blacks and compared them with the situation in the North in the years 1860 to 1935. Transplanted southern children were more likely than their native northern peers to face problems in school due to the vastly different educational, economic, and social expectations that made adjustment difficult. In many areas of the South, no public secondary education was provided for African Americans until after World War II (Anderson 188-193). Frazier, writing in 1949, also noted the much lower proportion of African Americans with a high school education in the South versus the North. For those who did attend school, days in the classroom were fewer, less material was taught, and expectation of achievement was lower. Therefore, a pupil moving into the same grade level from a southern to a northern classroom was often behind before even entering the building. On the other hand, placing the student in a lower grade level in the North exacerbated the social problems.

In either case, southern black children with normal potential often felt inferior and did not succeed in northern schools, supporting the suspicion of many people that blacks were intellectually subordinate to whites. Indeed, the army tests administered to all draftees during World War I had resulted in an overall intelligence rating for blacks below that of whites. However, further examination revealed that northerners as a group were rated above southerners, and that northern blacks as a group were rated above southern whites. The differences plainly were attributable to environment and education rather than to intellect or ability (Hall 69).⁵⁵ In other words, racist policies prevented many African Americans, especially in the South, from obtaining an education

⁵⁵ Arthur S. Otis, who developed and administered the first army intelligence test for 1,700,000 draftees and served as psychology examiner of draftees in July 1918, was on the summer faculty of Montclair State Teachers College in 1942 (*MT* 6/28/42).

comparable to that offered their white peers. Several subjects in this study, or their parents, lived through the difficult transition from southern to northern schools. Others felt the residual effects of educational inequality between the North and South through teachers' extension of lower achievement expectation to *all* black students.

In *An American Dilemma*, Myrdal's massive sociological analysis of African Americans, he investigated the patterns of discrimination and prejudice—including those in education—that had originated in the South and were still in evidence throughout the country at the time of his writing in 1944. With regard to New Jersey specifically, he noted that the state could be considered “southern” using the criterion of legal school segregation, which was permitted in the elementary grades (632). Wright, a historian who lived for some time in Montclair, traced the legal and social origins of both segregated and mixed education within the state, including reference to the training and employment of black teachers—both of which were negligible in proportion to the population. Clearly, the subjects of the present study who did not obtain teaching jobs within New Jersey were not fabricating excuses for personal failures; they had come up against a thick wall of racist state policy. As noted by Walter Cronkite, racism was blatant in the South and latent in the North.

The issue of legal segregation in the schools was not a simple matter of whites favoring it and blacks opposing it. Anderson, Frazier, Myrdal, and Wright all addressed the reality of school segregation throughout the country, even where there were laws prohibiting it, and discussed the dispute within the black community over the benefits of single-race education. As considered in Chapter II, some African Americans supported separation in the schools, revealing the range of thought among black people concerning the best and/or most expedient ways to advance their condition.

The differences between Booker T. Washington and W. E. B. DuBois in the early twentieth century illustrate two very distinct proposals for such advancement.

Washington advocated industrial education for black youth as better than no education, whereas DuBois was unwilling to compromise on the opportunity for full education. In New Jersey, this philosophical struggle was manifested through the Manual Training and Industrial School for Colored Youth at Bordentown, as described in Chapter II. The conflict also was clear in the painful attempts by many black college graduates to acquire professional positions in teaching throughout the state. A good academic education could have been considered dysfunctional for the black graduate who was unable to use that knowledge in self-support. Myrdal's view, along the lines of Washington's philosophy, was that vocational education for African Americans was inevitable given existing job opportunities.

In examining higher education, Anderson found that New Jersey, like all other northern states, did not prohibit the enrollment of African Americans in public colleges, although individual prejudice rather than official policy did result in minor forms of discrimination on a few (unidentified) campuses (633). Because teaching often has been relegated to a low status, despite the societal need for intelligent and excellent teachers, teachers colleges provided an educational compromise for some black students on the collegiate level similar to that offered through industrial and vocational precollegiate training (for example, New Jersey's Bordentown facility). The teachers colleges furnished opportunities to young people whose backgrounds—social and/or economic and/or racial—otherwise would have kept them from any higher education at all.

Frazier's conclusion regarding racism and education was in harmony with those of the other major researchers: Although educational opportunities had improved for blacks throughout the country, both precollegiate and higher education were much better

in the North. Nevertheless, “better” was not necessarily “good.” Wright proposed an examination of the social and racial attitudes of students in New Jersey’s teachers colleges, given the likely influence of those attitudes on present and future educational policies and practices. Increased knowledge of the role played by teacher education in developing the social fabric of our culture may help to uncover more of the roots of the persistent educational problems of the present which, in the words of Shannon, seem to be fixed in the past (394). One of my goals in interviewing both black and white alumni of Montclair State Teachers College was to gain a deeper understanding of their attitudes and experiences, which may have been influential in the lives of their future students as suggested by Wright.

The opportunity to find appropriate work within the state for those African Americans who were able to enroll in and graduate from a teachers college was examined primarily through the works of Egerton Elliott Hall 1935 (*The Negro Wage Earner of New Jersey*) and Gunnar Myrdal 1944 (*An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*).

Hall, writing in 1935, realized that many black parents who could not find adequate work experienced unsatisfied longings, insufficient security, and loss of self-respect. Granted, the Depression made life tough for many white families, too. But a disproportionate number of black families had to rely on public welfare when their low-paying jobs either were terminated or could not provide satisfactory support (64). African American children were affected to the point that many became aggressively resentful or ceased to strive because they looked at their parents’ inability to obtain meaningful work and saw no hope of a better future for themselves (70). Combined with the lack of positive race coverage in school history and civics courses and the lack of placement opportunities after preparing in school for a vocation, such disillusionment had

the potential for creating unstable societal conditions. Hall called urgently for the schools to take responsibility for turning the tide of black education and employment in New Jersey—including but not limited to the teaching profession.

As was shown in Chapter II, teaching jobs for African Americans within the state did increase slowly. But a decade after Hall's work was published, Myrdal's extensive exposé of the "American dilemma" still revealed, among numerous other issues, the irony of the American educational system wherein the schooling that was now fully available to black youth made the continued barrier to many employment opportunities deeply discouraging.⁵⁶ Most northern schools maintained racist policies and did not hire black teachers. Hence, despite its distinguishing disadvantages, the South did offer some benefits to African Americans. By the 1940s, more than 5% of employed black women in the South were in various professional positions. In the North, the figure was less than 3%, mainly because of the scarcity of teaching opportunities (318). Many black graduates of New Jersey teachers colleges began their careers in the South, and some never returned to fulfill their pledge to teach in the state—nor were they asked to refund the cost of their education in accordance with state policy. The dismal career prospects of black students at Montclair State Teachers College enhance one's admiration for their determination to enroll and to graduate.

All of these observations, together with those of others, provide a greater appreciation of the obstacles to education and professional opportunities faced by African

⁵⁶ There are parallels with professional opportunities for women. Solomon (198) quoted a report of the American Council on Education identifying the lack of aspiration among women in the 1940s as a social problem, noting the discrepancy between their education and society's expectations for them. However, a higher percentage of women did begin professional work following the departure of veterans from colleges in the late 1950s. African Americans had to overcome bigger barriers, resorting to legal action to acquire professional opportunities and positions.

Americans. They encountered racism not only in the South but also in New Jersey, which many have considered to be an enlightened northern state. Racism at Montclair State Teachers College will be analyzed in Chapter VI, "Discussion," as a concept that personally affected only the black students and therefore provided a sharp distinction between their experiences and those of their white peers. The difference was not a matter of degree; one group of students was untouched by racism whereas the other was always aware of its possibility, if only in the back of the mind.

In summary, racism has changed as a sociological concept over time, but the general theme has remained constant: Some people are thought to be better than others. In the United States, racism has hindered the development of African Americans educationally, economically, socially, and politically. Even so, blacks have not been united with regard to the best ways to advance their condition. Opportunities generally have been greater in the North. However, in the first half of the twentieth century, positions for African American teachers were found more readily in the segregated South.

Status Attainment

The second major concept is the attainment of status—one's position relative to others in the hierarchy of prestige. This concept will be discussed using the works of Howard R. Bowen 1977 (*Investment in Learning*), Steven Brint and Jerome Karabel 1989 (*The Diverted Dream: Community Colleges and the Promise of Educational Opportunity in America, 1900-1985*), K. Patricia Cross 1971 (*Beyond the Open Door*), Christopher Jencks and David Riesman 1968 (*The Academic Revolution*), Gunnar Myrdal 1944 (*An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*), Gail E. Thomas 1981 (*Black Students in Higher Education: Conditions and Experiences in the 1970s*), Gordon

W. Allport 1954 (*The Nature of Prejudice*), and Vincent Tinto 1987, revised 1993 (*Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*).

Myrdal's sociological study and Tinto's work on retention were referenced earlier. Bowen's mission was to evaluate educational outcomes, determine whether the outcomes were worth the cost, and cite broad implications for higher education policy. Brint and Karabel's research dealt specifically with status issues related to American community colleges, but their insights are applicable more generally as well. Cross investigated the status of "new students" (those typically underrepresented in college because they score in the lowest third on a conventional test of academic achievement, as opposed to traditional students who score in the top third). Her work suggested ways to analyze factors that were plainly applicable to earlier generations of students who were not the focus of such explicit research during their college days. Jencks and Riesman examined the "academic revolution" that occurred in American higher education in the mid-twentieth century. Thomas edited a book that addressed numerous factors related to the higher education, integration, and retention of black students in the years following the period of the present study. Allport's work, published shortly after the end of World War II, addressed the issue of prejudice in psychological terms.

Bowen defined inequality as "the degree of difference in *social position* among individuals or classes, reflecting the combined influence of freedom, power, status, income, and psychic satisfaction." He noted the wide diffusion in social position in most industrial civilizations, ruefully observing the common failure of the ideal of equality when confronted by the human lust for power—or, we may say, status (329, 336). Thus, like other advanced industrial societies, the United States has faced the problem of "management of ambition" (Brint and Karabel 7). The fact of class stratification is not seriously debated, but its existence is mitigated by the alleged openness of that structure.

The promise of success or higher status is held out to all who are willing to work hard, which encourages those from lower status groups—people from the bottom socioeconomic levels and people of color—to join the race. But there is not enough room at the finish line for everyone, and the lower status groups often do not reach it.

In the year of Montclair State Normal School's birth, 1908, Dean James Russell of Teachers College at Columbia University worried presciently about the future of the United States when it "deliberately seeks to raise ambitions and aspirations in the oncoming generations which in the nature of events cannot possibly be fulfilled." Half a century later, Burton Clark, author of a seminal article on the "cooling out" function of higher education, proclaimed that "a major problem of democratic society is inconsistency between encouragement to achieve and the realities of limited opportunity" (both quoted by Brint and Karabel 10-11). Brint and Karabel cited a 1950 survey that contrasted Europe's overt class consciousness (as demonstrated by the separation of social classes in the schools) with America's efforts to diminish class awareness (as shown by the diversity in its schoolrooms). Although boundaries were present in the United States, they were largely invisible within the precollegiate classroom structure. The illusion of permeability was maintained until students arrived at the hurdle of higher education (221, 223-224).

Education has been regarded as central to the attainment of the traditional American ideal of equality in opportunity (Bowen 329). It was noted in the previous section on racism that some researchers believe oppressed minorities tend to accept the assumptions and aspirations of their oppressors. In keeping with these observations, Cross reported that the difference in college aspirations between whites and nonwhites was less than the difference between males and females (117). Lower status students believe the democratic promise and reach for its fulfillment.

Research reveals that institutions as well as individuals are in pursuit of higher status, with colleges of low prestige tending to imitate the national leaders in a snakelike procession as the long body follows the path taken by the head (Astin 1985 11, quoting Riesman). But colleges that are connected to high-prestige markets (as medical schools are to the medical profession) will always enjoy higher status than, for example, teachers colleges that are coupled with a low-prestige market (Brint and Karabel 11). And, in the case of black colleges, Jencks and Riesman suggested that they developed with a determination to be as similar to white colleges as possible in order to avoid the appearance of being lower class (425). But the best single index of an institution's eminence is its selectivity, defined as the average SAT score of its entering freshmen (Astin 1985 6). For historic reasons that have been explored in Chapter II, black students often are underprepared for college work and their low SAT scores keep the black schools that accept them in a lower status position.

A strong correlation exists between educational attainment and cultural class background, although it is not necessarily a causal relationship (Jencks and Riesman 76, 121). While lower class children might *aspire* to a college education for upward mobility, upper-middle class children are *expected* to earn a college degree in order to prevent downward mobility, which "holds far greater terrors than the mere frustration of [being denied] upward mobility." In general, higher status families will fight harder to keep their position than others will to attain a superior standing (Jencks and Riesman 133-134).

Nevertheless, some lower status students will "make it." Myrdal observed in the 1940s that upper or middle class status attained by African Americans came with a price. Lower status black workers generally labored in the white-dominated economy. The occupations of the higher black classes, on the other hand, usually forced them into work

that was either economically dependent on the segregated black community (lawyers, various business owners) or in service to segregated public institutions (hospitals, schools), thus effectively keeping them out of the national mainstream (304). The equalization of educational opportunity does not guarantee social equality. If African Americans can graduate from college without the same breadth of career possibilities as whites, then the opportunity is not equal. “Opportunities are equal when outcomes are equal” (Astin 1985 80-81).

After the 1940s, more black students were permitted to live on college campuses. This opening has been instrumental in transforming many African Americans into “professional and managerial leaders with a comparatively cosmopolitan outlook” (Jencks and Riesman 182). Unlike their commuting peers, residential students have the chance to live with people from higher class families and communities, thus obtaining first-hand information on what they are like and how they operate. These students have a better opportunity to learn how to fit into the new (higher status) culture due to personal close observation. Still, in the bleak view of Cross, even if the United States had a true egalitarian higher education system so that everyone had a college degree, employment decisions would be made using criteria other than educational attainment. Blacks and others might increase their absolute standard of living, but remain in a lower status relative to whites who would be hired using other criteria (105).

Bowen pointed out that the success of students is based not only on their own educational achievement, but also on that attained by their ancestors (199). On the negative side, individual members of groups that traditionally have been regarded as lower status (and American blacks are a good example because of their historic slave status) may have difficulty in being taken seriously in the educational or professional world regardless of their personal ambition or ability. In the words of Jencks and

Riesman, “aptitude plays a larger role than class in determining who goes to college, but it is not *much* larger” (102). On the positive side, if the ancestors of black students have graduated from college and attained high level positions, those students may be more likely to achieve the same success by virtue of example and expectation.

The African American students who do reach college often choose to major in education. Thomas explained this fact in terms of the traditional elevation of teaching in the black community, as described in Chapter I. It was one of a handful of professional careers available to African Americans, the others being ministry, medicine, and law. However, the highest level for whites was not necessarily the same for blacks within a given profession. David Dickson, the first black president of Montclair State College, observed, for example, that because black attorneys could not work in higher status fields such as corporate law, they were forced to do lower level legal work. Thus, they did not always experience the prestige accorded other black professionals such as the clergy and teachers, who could attain top positions in their fields. The aspirations of black students may have differed from that of whites—not for lack of ambition or interest, but because of the reality of discrimination. Therefore, teaching often carried a higher status among African Americans than among whites (Myrdal 885).

Other factors leading black students toward teaching included role models, cultural values, and personality types. For example, Jomills Braddock (a contributing author in Thomas’ volume) noted that three types of variables have been found to influence career choice. The first is family support of education—many blacks are first-generation college students who must rely on an interested teacher, relative, or friend rather than a parent or sibling as an initial role model or source of support. The second is differences in values and socialization between blacks and whites—blacks more often prefer social “people-oriented” occupations including teaching. The third is personality

type—African Americans tend to be more group-oriented and thus drawn to teaching, which generally involves groups of scholars (167-168, 227). For black students, then, teaching has been held in high regard not only because of its professional nature, but also because it reinforces basic values inherent in the African American community as a whole.

But it should be noted that, as Myrdal pointed out, social class *within* black communities sometimes resulted in black-on-black discrimination in school and elsewhere. Allport, too, observed the worldwide condition of separateness among groups and cited a 1952 study that revealed even higher ethnocentrism among minority youth, including African Americans, than among native American whites in relation to friends, work companions, and dates. For example, sociologist Ira Reid found that American blacks stereotyped West Indian blacks in ways that generated suspicion and division. Groups of people cannot be forced into simple boxes. The enormous and subtle differences between individuals continually move the boundaries that define one group as opposed to another. Witness the familiar scene of small siblings expressing hatred toward one another—only to become each other’s protector and defender in united hatred against an outside enemy such as the bully down the block. “Me against you” is transformed into “you and me against him.” Braddock’s observation of high group cohesiveness thus lives in inevitable juxtaposition with Myrdal’s and Allport’s observation of separateness within groups.

Research has exposed the existence within black society of such layers, which might be based on financial standing or family heritage or even color and hair texture. These factors were mentioned by some of the subjects in this study and will be referenced in Chapter VI, “Discussion.” On reflection, it is not a surprising finding. A group as heterogeneous as American blacks might be expected to exhibit the same variation in

style, preference, ability, prejudice, and competition as other diverse groups. Individual or family achievement may result in generous assistance to those still striving to attain or, conversely, in the development of exclusive tendencies on the part of those who have reached their goals. Classism—prejudice or discrimination based on social class—has been an additional determinant of educational opportunities for many African American students.

President Dickson of Montclair State College, for example, was educated in private schools in the Northeast and confessed to snobbery on the part of some professional blacks. He acknowledged the great variety in relationships among African Americans due to cultural differences, and mentioned his own struggle to overcome negative feelings about public colleges following his graduation from Bowdoin—feelings that had been inculcated by his social group. He was, in fact, part of an elite band of only about 10 black graduates of Bowdoin in a period spanning more than 100 years, and those 10 included two of his own brothers. When he began to teach in state universities, he found that the institutions were “surprisingly good and made me question my own snobbish scorn of former teachers’ colleges” (71). Nevertheless, and perhaps predictably, President Dickson revealed that he was not sought out in particular by black students during his tenure as president—a fact that he attributed to his desire to relate equally to all students.⁵⁷

Tinto pointed out that higher occupational goals increase the likelihood of college completion, particularly if the degree is imperative for admittance to the high-status career (1993 38). As previously noted, for African Americans such careers

⁵⁷ Conversation on 10/31/95. I was an undergraduate student when President Dickson took office, and was not aware that the new president was black.

traditionally included teaching which, together with the other professions commonly open to blacks, generally has required a college degree throughout most of the twentieth century. Tinto also found that students who were not doing well academically but were committed to a specific career (such as teaching) were twice as likely to graduate as their peers who were undecided about a vocational objective. The determination to attain a certain status—in this case, to become a teacher—can neutralize negative or racist experiences that otherwise might derail a black student's college career (1993 43, 81, 111).

In summary, higher status—the degree of difference in social position—has been like a golden ring extended toward all Americans, reachable through effort and ability. In reality, not everyone can grasp the ring, and it has been held tightly by whites as a group. Even within the African American community, there are status differences based on social class and personal characteristics. On the occupational level, higher status has been accorded to certain black professionals, including teachers.

Community

The third major area of study was the sense of community experienced by black students at Montclair State Teachers College. Throughout the literature, the feeling of community is entwined with the perception of college experience. The main authors I consulted were Thomas Bender 1978 (*Community and Social Change in America*), Irving Spitzberg and Virginia Thorndike 1992 (*Creating Community on College Campuses*), Vincent Tinto 1987, revised 1993 (*Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*), Louis C. Attinasi, Jr. 1989 ("Getting In: Mexican Americans' Perceptions of University Attendance and the Implications for Freshman Year

Persistence”), and Wynetta Devore 1980 (“The Education of Blacks in New Jersey, 1900-1930”).

Bender, Spitzberg and Thorndike, and Tinto were selected for their recognized expertise within their disciplines; Attinasi for the important challenges he offered that were addressed shortly thereafter by Tinto in the revision to his seminal book; and Devore for the direct connection between her oral history research and the present study.

Bender, a historian, defined community as a

network of social relations marked by mutuality and emotional bonds . . . [involving] a limited number of people in a somewhat restricted social space or network held together by shared understandings and a sense of obligation . . . an elemental fact of one’s emotional life. (6-8)

Bender endorsed Robert Nisbet’s earlier description of the family as the archetype of community and Max Weber’s contrast of “communal” (feeling of belonging together) with “associative” (based upon self-interest) relationships (9). My initial assumption was that a relatively small teacher education program would or should have engendered both types of relationships, but especially a communal one in which students felt a belongingness in their “somewhat restricted social space.” There would seem to be less need for self-interested associative relationships in student life than in later vocational life. A community in this sense does not refer to a physical location.

More recently, however, the term community indeed has come to describe numbers of people living in proximity as well as special interest groups. Nevertheless, in their extensive 1992 study, Spitzberg and Thorndike found that the excitement generated on college campuses by the concept of community was evoked by images not of physical closeness but of learning communities and school spirit—hearkening back to an earlier view. Yet their research also revealed that rarely did current students actually feel the

campus to be an academic community. Students tended to be credential-oriented on campus and often experienced community at their jobs or in their families instead.

However, minority students of the 1990s—especially African Americans—felt a kind of campus isolation even beyond that experienced by students in general, which affected their academic performance and separated them from whatever community-as-a-whole existed (47). For them, the home communities (family, friends, church) may have been especially important in maintaining a sense of belonging somewhere.

Paradoxically, their new identities as college students may have created tension within those familiar communities as they became different from the folks back home, thus leading to a sense of not being a full member of any group. Some of the questions posed to subjects in this study were designed to elicit their feelings of community as students—however they defined it then (but, of course, through the prism of intervening years).

Among other researchers who used the concept of community in relation to the campus was Tinto, who viewed colleges as clusters of social and academic communities (1993 121). He described his theory of persistence as a “model of educational communities that highlights the critical importance of student engagement or involvement in the learning communities of the college” (1993 132). Thus, one of Tinto’s main tenets is the significance of integration into some college community for student development and graduation.

The concept of integration will be explored in greater depth in the next section of this chapter. At this point, it is worth noting Tinto’s observation, and that of numerous others, that college success for students of color is often highly correlated to the availability of similar students with whom to form viable subcommunities (1993 59-60).

Similarity of race alone is not sufficient, but is one of the important ingredients in creating satisfactory subgroups.⁵⁸ The communities may be found through both classroom and social experiences, with one often “nested” inside another as academic communities foster social communities. For students unable to join or create such groups, a home or work fellowship may substitute for the lack on campus. Chapter VI, “Discussion,” will include an analysis of the college experiences of black students in relation to compatible subgroups.

Tinto cautioned that college communities are dissimilar from other human communities in that people do not take up permanent physical residence there; hence, the campus does not have the same “holding power” as do other communities. Also, a community—like a family—can encompass disagreements and dissonance within the larger framework of concern for one another’s welfare.

Attinasi’s work with Mexican Americans showed the importance of community in assisting students to develop the relationships with specific individuals, both mentors and peers, that will integrate them into the physical, academic, and social geographies of the campus. To explain how students locate themselves in these various areas, Attinasi used the concept of “cognitive mapping” (268-270). The university campus as a whole may be too large and complex for complete apprehension by a newcomer. Sharing knowledge with others establishes connections between seemingly unrelated objects in the unfamiliar environment, resulting in smaller-scaled personal “maps” constructed by each student to fit individual needs.

⁵⁸ Tinto acknowledged Fleming’s finding that supportive communities with faculty as well as with other students is essential for the success of black students, but noted that such support is necessary for all other students as well (1993 122).

Social interactions are shortcuts to creating these cognitive maps, which facilitate a sense of belonging to a comprehensible organization and, thus, lead to persistence in college. Tinto made a similar point in stating that it appeared to be especially important for disadvantaged minority students, more than others, to have “like-person role models who have successfully navigated the waters of majority institutions” if they are to succeed themselves (1982 161).

In the context of the campus, therefore, the term community addresses the affective need of students to belong to a friendly, cohesive, group-oriented “family” in order to thrive. That community may be the college as a whole or, more likely, some subgroup. A number of researchers pointed to the importance of campus connections with both faculty and peers in the success of students, especially those who may not find ready acceptance—such as black students on a white campus.

According to Spitzberg and Thorndike, African American students as a group experience significantly more alienation on campus than do other minorities (27). Consequently, they often organize their own formal and informal subcommunities based on race to enhance both identification and opportunities for participation. Spitzberg and Thorndike acknowledged the necessity for such subgroups in any healthy community, but stressed the need to choose participation freely and to remain connected to the larger community. They discovered that black students often felt pressured by peers to join the subgroups or forced to do so by lack of welcome in the main group (48).

Devore used oral history in her exploration of the education of blacks in New Jersey in the first three decades of the twentieth century. As an African American, she was able to elicit very frank and often critical responses from her elderly black subjects. They related incidents and reactions that would not have been experienced by their white classmates in the college community. The world can look and feel very different to two

people standing in the same spot at the same time—or attending the same college with the same career goal—and documenting the experiences of white students does not necessarily capture the stories of black students in America. In accordance with Devore's recommendation that future research be directed toward the normal school experience of blacks in New Jersey, the present study is an endeavor to do so at one such institution by extension to the evolved teachers college. One goal has been to discover the extent of community experienced by African American students at Montclair and to find out what subgroups, if any, existed for them.

In summary, community is a sense of belonging that applies to both the academic and social worlds of college students. This sense may be felt in one or both areas, and is considered necessary in at least one in order to fulfill the goal of graduation. Minority students often have been excluded from the larger community, but have found acceptance in subgroups.

Integration/Persistence/Retention

The fourth concept, integration, is so closely linked with the fifth, persistence or retention, that they are examined together here. Most literature on persistence or retention postdates the years of this study, but many of the findings appear applicable to earlier as well as current generations of students. These concepts were explored using the works of Vincent Tinto 1987, revised 1993 (*Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*), Arthur W. Chickering 1969 (*Education and Identity*), Gail E. Thomas 1981 (*Black Students in Higher Education: Conditions and Experiences in the 1970s*), Alexander Astin 1982 (*Minorities in American Higher Education*) and 1985 (*Achieving Educational Excellence*), Michael T. Nettles 1988 (*Toward Black Undergraduate Student Equality in American Higher Education*), Louis C. Attinasi, Jr.

1989 (“Getting In: Mexican Americans’ Perceptions of University Attendance and the Implications for Freshman Year Persistence”), and Edward Murguía et al. 1991 (“Ethnicity and the Concept of Social Integration in Tinto’s Model of Institutional Departure”).

The credentials of Tinto, Attinasi, and Thomas have been described already. Chickering’s work on student identity development in college was carried out during the time of social upheaval in the 1960s. The focus of his research was not specifically black students or earlier generations of students. Yet his findings seem relevant to college students in general, including the African Americans of previous periods who found themselves, almost by definition, in a world of social upheaval by virtue of their race alone. Astin and Nettles are highly regarded and quoted for their more recent research on African American experiences in higher education. Murguía et al. are associated with the Hispanic Research Center at Arizona State University. I deemed it important to consult authors from a variety of racial backgrounds, which indeed are represented among the selected writers.

Tinto’s extensive research led to his postulating a theory about the reasons students leave (and remain in) college. His work dealt with how the final college outcome is affected by students’ pre-entry attributes (family background, skills and abilities, and prior schooling), initial goals and commitments, experiences in the institution’s academic and social systems, integration into those systems, and revised goals and commitments. (His model is included as Appendix A.) The concepts of academic (or intellectual) and social integration are central to his work and ultimately served as the basic tool to formulate the interview questions that will be described in detail in Chapter IV, “Method.” Emile Durkheim’s characterization of integration as

both intellectual (sharing values with others in the group) and social (personal affiliations) was influential in the development of Tinto's model (Tinto 1987 101).

Chickering identified two "laws" of student development in college. The first is that development occurs in cycles of integration and differentiation. This concept is important in understanding the alternating (and perhaps overlapping) needs of students to belong to one or more communities as well as to develop a separate identity. The second "law" asserted by Chickering is that the impact of an experience depends upon the characteristics of the person encountering it (316). His well-known example is that educators have assumed students to be like billiard balls:

all alike in shape, size, and density, all stationary till struck. . . . If students are struck in just the right spot, they all will behave in proper fashion and inexorably be impelled in the ordained direction. The trouble, of course, is that only a few students are smooth and well-rounded. (299)

The African American students in the present study—even if they were smooth and well-rounded—could not easily have been impelled in the ordained direction because of their inability, in many cases, to fulfill the teaching role for which the state was preparing them. Racism often kept them out of New Jersey classrooms. Thus, their experiences of both integration and differentiation of necessity were unlike those of their white classmates.

Academic integration is viewed by Tinto in formal and informal terms. The formal aspect involves experiences in the classroom whereby faculty members provide appropriate intellectual challenge and promote interaction among students and between professors and students. For commuting students, academic integration is especially important if they are not involved in much of the campus social life. Tinto observed that faculty may facilitate intellectual integration by selecting particular students for nurturing due to their perceived potential in the discipline (1993 57). Other students have to be

more aggressive in gaining faculty attention. Recent studies have shown that black students may have the skills needed for academic success, but lack the ability to apply them in a setting that is unfamiliar and perhaps unfriendly (1993 73). For these students, successful informal academic integration—their interactions with faculty and staff outside the classroom setting—may assist in attaining formal integration as well.

Social integration is likewise divided into formal and informal systems. The formal system includes structured extracurricular activities whereas the informal encompasses the less official peer group interactions. Tinto found that formal social interactions can be more important for the integration of black students than for white students (1993 74). These include service on campuswide or departmental committees, positions on the student newspaper, work with the student government, and employment on campus.

Integration into all systems is desirable for retention, but strong connections in some areas may compensate for a lack in others (Tinto 1993 59). In one sense, academic integration is more important than social integration because adequate classroom performance as demonstrated through grades is required for continued registration, whereas social integration is not required. However, if unsatisfactory social conditions are severe enough, they can weaken academic performance and lead to the same outcome of dismissal (1993 107-108). If the social interaction is at least minimally satisfactory in the first two years, research indicates that academic involvement takes on increasing importance in the last two years as student learning becomes more significant in the looming need to begin a career (1993 72, 135).

The absence of integration may be due to either incongruence or isolation, both of which may apply to either the academic or social system. Incongruence is a lack of institutional fit as perceived by the student. Although interactions with others on campus

occur, they do not lead to a sense of identification or belonging. Incongruence often results in a decision to transfer to an institution that is believed to be more compatible. For African American students, this may mean transferring to a black college if the initial institution was largely white (Tinto 1993 53-54).

Isolation, on the other hand, is the shortage of sufficient interaction (1993 50). The exclusion of an individual from the life of the campus may result from a variety of factors. While a person of any ethnic or socioeconomic background may suffer from isolation, students of color can be targeted due to race in addition to factors used as justification to ostracize other students. Racism as a source of isolation is peculiar to minority students.

Integrative experiences in both the academic and social worlds of the institution reinforce persistence, whereas malintegrative experiences diminish ties to the college and perhaps to higher education in general, decreasing the prospect of retention. Tinto noted that specialized advising by minority counselors is effective in the retention of students of color (1993 185). Such services were not available to any of the subjects at Montclair State Teachers College who were interviewed for this study.

However, MSTC did have the advantage of being in a position to answer Tinto's query had it been posed during the period under study: "What is the educational problem for which the institution is the proposed solution?" Tinto asserted that decisions regarding retention must be made in concert with the answer to that question for the benefit of both the college and the student (1993 208-209). Montclair could have responded that it was the solution to the problem of the shortage of qualified high school teachers in New Jersey. Students who wished to fill that need and had the ability to do so would have been candidates for assistance in persistence to graduation.

Montclair also may have had an advantage over strictly liberal arts colleges in that the faculty could be presumed to have an exceptional focus on good pedagogy given their employment as teachers of teachers. Because good teaching leads to better academic integration, black students at MSTC probably had a higher than average chance to persist.

Tinto found that the rate of college graduation has remained substantially the same over the course of the past century, although the time needed to complete the degree has changed (1993 25). Students are more likely now than 100 years ago to be enrolled part-time, requiring extra years to graduate. A more recent focus on differences in degree completion between various ethnic groups shows about a 23% greater rate for white students than for minority students as a whole. However, for people of comparable ability and socioeconomic background, the difference was only about 10% higher for white than for black students (1993 31-32). Thomas even found race to be a positive predictor of full-time persistence for blacks who were similar to whites on other significant predictor variables; in those cases, blacks were somewhat more likely to persist (82).

Astin's analysis of minorities in American higher education concentrated explicitly on trends since 1960, citing the dearth of data on minority enrollments prior to—and the swell of social programs subsequent to—that time. He learned that African Americans who attend college in the Northeast earn higher grades, are less likely to drop out, and are more likely to be satisfied with their schooling than their peers who attend institutions in other parts of the country. Astin speculated that the high concentration of minorities in the Northeast as well as the region's history of liberalism in civil rights issues have contributed to the colleges' relative sophistication and progressiveness in working with black students (1982 105). His work pertained to the latter two-fifths of the

twentieth century whereas the subjects in this study were college students in mid-century. Nevertheless, the history of liberalism that Astin acknowledged was in process then as it was later.

Astin documented other factors that are applicable to MSTC as well. For example, aspiring to become a teacher is related positively to persistence, and minorities who major in education perform relatively well academically (106-107, 111). Also, commuting does not offer the same level of educational opportunity for traditional black college students who pursue a baccalaureate on a full-time basis immediately after high school; for them as well as for Chicano students, a residential experience is especially helpful (152, 183). Another point is that minority students who work more than part time at a job off campus are in danger of not persisting (183).

Astin also found that financial and other family responsibilities are often a burden for black students, particularly at the graduate level (184). Minority educators whom he surveyed indicated that family support and their own educational goals were most important in facilitating their graduation (184). Probably his best-known finding relates to the positive impact on retention of involvement, defined as

the amount of physical and psychological energy that the student devotes to the academic experience. A highly involved student is one who, for example, devotes considerable energy to studying, spends a lot of time on campus, participates actively in student organizations, and interacts frequently with faculty members and other students. (1985 134)

All of these discoveries appear applicable to the Montclair sample from the decades preceding 1960—the very years that Astin could not study.

Nettles examined qualitative indicators of equality in relation to the success of black students. He asserted that qualitative factors such as “academic, social, and extracurricular experiences during college [and] involvement with faculty and peers in the college environment” (10) had frequently been overlooked in favor of quantitative

indicators of success. There is overwhelming agreement between Nettles and Tinto on the value of both academic and social integration to a college student's eventual graduation. But Nettles pointed out subtle and sometimes startling differences between black and white students. For example, although the lack of social integration has a negative effect on the grades of both groups of students, the effect is greater for whites than for blacks. Similarly, interfering problems (physical, emotional, and relational) have a greater negative effect on the grades of white students. Perhaps black students have more experience with, or expectation of, being excluded and having to deal with certain problems.

Nettles found that white students experience greater academic integration and that black students have relatively high social integration. As observed by Tinto, one or the other alone can be sufficient for retention in contemporary universities. Tinto discovered that, depending on the student, complete integration into one system or community might be adequate if there are compensations such as strong commitment or external support. For example, commuting students may integrate into the academic system despite an inadequate connection with the social system due to their limited time on campus.

Student success was discussed by Nettles and the authors who contributed to his book in terms of race itself, racism, and the quality of prior instruction in elementary and secondary schools. "Black miseducation in this society begins in the early years of school resulting in a cumulative effect that is revealed in college" (78). Nettles' research reinforced and supplemented Tinto's work in understanding the comments of the Montclair interviewees with regard to their pre-college experiences as well as their academic and social integration in college.

But the application of Tinto's work to minority students in particular has been questioned. Attinasi suggested that the research methods of Tinto and others have relied upon data collection techniques such as institutional records and/or fixed-choice questionnaires that exclude consideration of student perceptions and decision-making contexts. Attinasi advocated, instead, that greater attention be given to "naturalistic, descriptive studies guided by research principles that emphasize the insider's point of view" (250).

Murguía et al. were similarly concerned that quantitative studies based on Tinto's model could account for only small amounts of explained variance in dropout rates. They believed the model's central constructs—academic and social integration—were incomplete with regard to how ethnicity influences the social integration of college students. Therefore, they used qualitative analysis to explore the role of ethnicity (Hispanic and Native American) in Tinto's model.

Murguía's study, like mine, involved structured, open-ended interviews with 24 ethnic students. (There were no white subjects in his research.) Responses to the questions yielded three concepts describing the functions of ethnicity for the subjects: self-identity, a sense of place in the world, and affective support. His work, conducted at the end of the twentieth century, showed that students relied heavily on "ethnic enclaves" to socialize themselves within the college. Thus, Murguía suggested that users of Tinto's model "pay particular attention to ethnic enclaves if the research involves ethnic participants" (436). However, as will be demonstrated, official ethnic enclaves did not exist during the years of my study.

The dichotomy between Tinto's and Attinasi's approaches suggested by the latter appears insignificant, inasmuch as Tinto also emphasized the necessity of examining student perceptions (1987 127). Both researchers confirmed the need to hear from

students orally—not only via paper questionnaires—how they experienced the college, thus reinforcing the value of oral history as a research method. The present study is like a short footbridge connecting the two views.

In summary, integration as a theoretical concept in this research refers not to the blending of races but to academic (intellectual) and social (personal) affiliations. Integration into both systems is preferred for college student persistence/retention, although one without the other may be sufficient. Integration and persistence are facilitated by congruence with the goals of the institution, absence of isolation, high involvement in campus life, and focus on a professional goal (including, specifically, teaching). Additionally, the integration must be coupled with differentiation as the student develops an identity separate from the group. The perceptions of the student—whether or not they match “reality”—are important in the decision to persist or quit.

Changes in the Status of African Americans

The foregoing sections provide the conceptual framework that formed the basis of discussion with subjects in the present study. In addition to these theoretical concepts, the historical framework was critical in the analysis of subjects’ comments—especially the changes in the status of African Americans that constituted a thread running through the five major research themes. Therefore, a summary of those changes is included here to establish a historical context for the theoretical concepts. The major works consulted in this area were by Gunnar Myrdal 1944 (*An American Dilemma: The Negro Problem and Modern Democracy*), Gordon W. Allport 1954 (*The Nature of Prejudice*), John Hope Franklin 1947, revised 1988 (*From Slavery to Freedom: A History of Negro Americans*), Horace Mann Bond 1934, revised 1965 (*The Education of the Negro in the American Social Order*), and E. Frederic Morrow 1973 (*Way Down South Up North*).

Myrdal, whose work has been referenced before, was one of four giants in the sociological/historical study of African Americans during the 1930s and 1940s; the others were Bond, Franklin, and Frazier. They did exhaustive research on the status of blacks in the United States and revised their works to bring them up to date in later decades. Their various points of reference provided a comprehensive review of conditions for African Americans prior to and during the entire period of the present study.

Allport's analysis of prejudice was selected in part because of the timeliness of his study with regard to the period being examined at Montclair State Teachers College. World War II brought the issue of race to the fore, and sensible Americans were forced to confront their own racial attitudes. Morrow was consulted for his personal and visible journey as a black man in New Jersey who became associated with a powerful president during the period under study and for his account of his sister's experience at Montclair and her subsequent attempts to secure a teaching position in New Jersey.

Myrdal defined the "American dilemma" as follows:

the ever-raging conflict between, on the one hand, the valuations preserved on the general plane . . . of high rational and Christian precepts, and, on the other hand, the valuations of specific planes of individual and group living, where . . . all sorts of miscellaneous wants, impulses, and habits dominate [one's] outlook.
(xliii)

The United States of America was built on the lofty ideals of democracy and freedom and tolerance and respect—Myrdal's "high rational and Christian precepts." But from the beginning, reality belied those precepts. On the "specific planes of individual and group living," inequities abounded and intolerance was accepted. On the group level, the majority of the population—females and blacks—was subject to the rule of the educated white male minority. On the individual level, the "miscellaneous wants, impulses, and habits" cited by Myrdal led people to see others in terms of fulfilling their own needs, whether personal or economic.

For example, black slavery initially was deemed necessary for economic reasons, and the habit of disrespect required to sustain such a blatant violation of democracy was carried through post-emancipation. Myrdal shed light on the reasons for this violation by pointing out the sociological principle that ideologies continue after the conditions that gave rise to them no longer exist. This concept was important in understanding the reasons undergirding some of the actions and beliefs of both whites and blacks that seemed not to be based on present reality. They had grown up with ideas that were passed down from the experiences of their grandparents and parents, but that were not necessarily objectively valid for themselves or for the current society.

Allport examined prejudice in Freudian terms, viewing it as a response to people's id (base impulses) and superego (conscience). He theorized that unfairness and even cruelty could be justified in the eyes of Adolf Hitler and others because they were directed against the projected baseness of oneself. Allport presented the issue of prejudice for open discussion and self-analysis among thoughtful people, many of whom undoubtedly rejected his views as providing too easy an "out" for discrimination. But he did open the door for important debate.

Franklin's 1947 history of black Americans (revised in 1988) complemented Myrdal's sociological view. He documented national events, movements, and legal judgments that affected the lives of African Americans throughout the country. For black students at Montclair State Teachers College, new laws and federal programs provided access to jobs and social activities and paved the way for acceptance in the classroom, in the teaching profession, and in other careers. Organizations such as the NAACP, the National Urban League, and the black YM/YWCAs, along with the black churches, made a difference in the lives of participants in this study by providing leadership and social opportunities, which in turn had an effect on their college activities and outlooks on life.

Myrdal's lengthy analysis of the societal situation of African Americans in the 1940s led him to the final conclusion that because blacks would have to work in new occupations within the next generation in order to avoid national economic stagnation, black children needed an education that would make them adaptable to, and movable in, the culture at large (906). He correctly anticipated the rise of black literacy and cultural assimilation in the near future due to the prominence of "passive mass education" through radio, movies, magazines, and newspapers (886). Interestingly, he did not seem to foresee the effect of television, although by 1938 there were 20,000 sets in New York City alone (Grun 515). Franklin, in the 1988 revision of his 1947 book, did document the significant influence exerted by television beginning in the 1950s on mass beliefs, images, and myths and the opportunities provided for blacks to be featured in positive roles (433). It is evident that the public mood can be manipulated, for good or for ill.

If prejudice is perceived as the inevitable psychological response of a societal majority to a visible minority (Allport 199-200) or as a sociological habit (Myrdal xxviii), it seems less evil than ignorant, and more amenable to change through education.

Myrdal, Franklin, and Allport were in agreement that higher education would have a marked effect on reducing the "ever-raging conflict," as Myrdal defined the American dilemma, by lessening anxious and insecure feelings and improving the connections among all groups that are necessary for their separate and collective welfare. Yet no one predicted complete unity among the world's disparate groups. In fact, Allport's theory about the psychological human need to have "out-groups" could lead to the conclusion that education will improve tolerance but not eliminate prejudice entirely.

In the 1965 revision of his book, Bond noted with evident surprise the rapid changes in the education of African American students that had occurred in the three decades since his work first appeared—improvements he had considered so improbable

that he ignored their possibility when writing in 1934. Those were the changes experienced by some of Montclair's black students as integration began to replace "separate but equal" education.

In contrast to Bond, New Jersey native Morrow concluded his 1973 book with the unhappy conviction that despite his own successful struggle to achieve—including service as the first African American executive assistant to a United States president, Dwight Eisenhower—white America would not be putting out the welcome sign to blacks "for another eternity" (127). Where Bond was surprised in a positive sense, Morrow's surprise was quite negative.⁵⁹ The title of his book suggests his skepticism: *Way Down South Up North*. Morrow believed:

It is just not possible for any White to understand what centuries of repression, denial, and degradation have done to the black mind and spirit. Whites can philosophize and sympathize and empathize—but they can never spiritually feel the corrosive effects of everlasting insult and denial. (Morrow 119)

Despite Morrow's disappointment, he—like Myrdal, Franklin, Frazier, Allport, and Bond—understood and championed the power of legislation, Court decisions, and education in battling against discrimination (the outward display of private prejudice) and leading, slow as it may be, to increased tolerance.

In summary, changes in the historical status of African Americans in the twentieth century have influenced their enrollment and persistence in college. The early American ideal of democracy excluded blacks, initially for economic reasons and later by habit. In the first quarter of the century, the NAACP and other groups had some success in a campaign for changes in the laws that had permitted inequality. World War II

⁵⁹ Morrow's sister, Nellie, endured her own struggle to become a teacher in northern New Jersey following her graduation from the Montclair State Normal School in 1922. She was the first black teacher in Hackensack. Their father, John Eugene Morrow, pastored a black Methodist church in Closter to which a subject in this study, Thelma C, and her family belonged.

brought the issue into clear national focus as black troops endured segregation in the process of ensuring democracy in *other* countries. New and revised legislation, including the GI Bill, finally opened the doors of higher education much wider for African Americans. Education ultimately led to increased professional opportunities, which in turn led to increases in other spheres made possible by higher economic status.

Conclusion

This study is not based on a unified conceptual framework. Instead, as demonstrated in the present chapter, the works of a diverse group of researchers and scholars are relevant to an understanding of the success of African Americans in preparing for and entering the teaching profession. Specifically, the literature reviewed suggests that, for blacks, accessibility of quality education and teacher education as well as subsequent career opportunities are a function of a number of factors that include racism; a determination to attain a particular status; a combination of positive experiences and lack of negative experiences in college (community and integration); personal tenacity coupled with the support of others in persisting to graduation; and changes in the status of African Americans nationally.

These factors, which I am examining as possible influences on professional success, are a *mélange* of personal, environmental, social, and cultural conditions. The purpose of the current study is not to develop a causal model of what happened to African Americans in teacher education programs in the United States. Rather, an attempt has been made to gain a broader understanding—in Tinto's words, "informed impressions"—of the circumstances that existed for black students at a single institution using a blend of oral history, experiential studies, and theoretical constructs.

Tinto's model of persistence seemed to be the theoretical construct that best served as the basis for pulling together all the others in the development of specific questions for the study's subjects. His model is inclusive of other researchers' views and comprehensive in its approach. The categories developed by Tinto were combined with the method recommended by Attinasi, which he referred to as "the sociology of everyday life" (251). That is, the focus was on using structured interviews to reveal ordinary social interaction in natural situations—albeit those interactions occurred decades ago.

The questions were grouped in accordance with Tinto's model and they loosely captured the main elements of the conceptual framework as follows—although, as indicated earlier, there is significant overlap among the categories. For example, the concept of racism is linked here with Tinto's sections on pre-entry attributes and institutional experiences in particular, but it is a theme that touches every other category of the model as well.

<i>Tinto's Model</i>	<i>Concept</i>
pre-entry attributes	racism
goals and commitments (I)	status attainment
institutional experiences	community/racism
integration	integration
goals and commitments (II)	persistence
outcome	retention

With regard to the section on outcome, Tinto was concerned with the outcome of retention whereas—because all of my subjects graduated and there was no question as to that outcome—my focus was on the careers they attained following graduation.

The specific questions (described in Chapter IV, "Method") were grounded in the work of many other researchers in addition to Tinto and were open-ended enough to veer

in any direction suggested by the interviewee. Tinto's model, while not necessarily applicable in its entirety to students whose college life occurred more than four decades ago, served as a solid support for the theoretical framework and a springboard for exploring students' experiences at Montclair.

This chapter has provided a review of the major research and literary works that helped to form a basis for analyzing the experiences of African American students at Montclair State Teachers College during the period 1927 through 1957. The following chapter describes the methods used in gathering and analyzing the data related to the experiences of the subjects, including extensive readings in the area of oral history.

CHAPTER IV

METHOD

Introduction

The third chapter explored and synthesized the significant work of other researchers and writers that had an impact on understanding of the lives of African American students at Montclair State during three decades in the first half of the twentieth century. This chapter will describe a rationale for using oral history as a research method; the specific process used in gathering data, including the selection and questioning of interviewees; the reasoning behind each question; the method of transcription; the reliability and validity of oral history; and the analysis of data.

Oral History

National data on minority enrollment in higher education are sparse before 1960, and no official Montclair State data for the period of this study have been located. As indicated in Chapter II, Devore's review of reports by the principals of New Jersey normal schools revealed that statistical data on students included gender, but no mention of race. Later annual reports of Montclair State presidents likewise seem to be silent concerning race. For these and other reasons, a quantitative approach is not useful for investigating the experiences of a small number of African American subjects from 1927 through 1957.

The qualitative method is appropriate for interpreting how people feel or live their experiences. Creswell defines a qualitative study as "an inquiry process of

understanding a social or human problem, based on building a complex, holistic picture, formed with words, reporting detailed views of informants, and conducted in a natural setting” (1-2). Because the experiences of the subjects in this study occurred more than 40 years ago, they were not directly observable in a “natural setting.” Therefore, historical inquiry—a type of qualitative study (11)—was the best research method and oral history was the specific approach selected to carry out this investigation. It also contains components of case study (observing at a single institution) and phenomenological study (examining a small number of subjects to develop patterns and relationships of meaning), but does not match the full definition of either method (12).

Fitting the method used into a particular philosophical niche was not as important as actually providing the opportunity for subjects to revisit and verbalize their remembered experiences, and fitting those recollections into a historical context. Oral history can be approached from a topical, biographical, or autobiographical perspective; the present study is basically topical, although it certainly contains biographical and autobiographical elements. The development of oral history as a discipline and its application to this study are described below.

In 1935, the New Deal Works Progress Administration established the Federal Writers’ Project to provide employment for writers during the Depression. Thousands of people worked to create a detailed portrait of American life. Oral histories of former slaves formed part of the project and contributed to some of the first studies of black Americans. Among the writers was Studs Terkel, who became one of the country’s most popular oral historians.

However, Professor Allan Nevins of Columbia University is credited with being the founder of oral history as an organized discipline in 1948. According to his protégé, Louis Starr, Nevins observed that new technologies such as the telephone, automobile,

and airplane were robbing future historians of incalculable treasure by substituting for written letters in communication (5). Although new technologies provided a plethora of communication possibilities, they did not preserve much of the rich detail of human experience found in letters. (It is interesting to speculate that the even newer technologies, such as e-mail, may make written communications widely available once again for the use of future researchers.) Nevins decided to appropriate one of the earlier new technologies—the tape recorder—to counter the loss of written documents by capturing the spoken words of informants, and thus initiated a program of oral history at Columbia University.

Paul Thompson stepped beyond Nevins and Starr—who documented the lives of “big” *men* and events—and moved his microphone toward ordinary people. Their lives certainly helped shape history and the present, but their stories were not previously known. He pointed out that, due to the complexity of reality, oral history, more than traditional sources, permits the original multiplicity of viewpoints to be recreated (5). When historical emphasis is on elites only as opposed to the inclusion of ordinary people, mythical histories result (Okihiro 206). In oral history, the “objects” of study become “subjects” instead, which creates a history that is “not just richer, more vivid and heartrending, but *truer*” (Thompson 90).

Yet ordinary people did not always represent *all* people. A proponent of oral history accused the profession in 1968 of “notoriously avoid[ing] this method as a viable means of capturing and retaining the history of the Black man” (Simmons 5). By 1984, black history had become an important component of oral history projects (Hoffman 69).

The oral traditions of many African cultures appear to make oral history a natural method for exploring the lives of the descendants of those peoples. Slavery, accompanied as it was by enforced illiteracy, preserved the oral tradition among African

Americans for a much longer period than among other groups. A black Harvard student in the late 1950s reflected:

We remained African because in Africa we had possessed a complex and highly-developed oral tradition. Knowledge . . . was passed from one generation to the next, orally. For the most part, we did not have written languages, books. . . . You must have money to get into such places, to study books, to buy books. Everybody cannot do it. Many more people talk than write. Many more people hear and see than read. And we, those of us whose ancestors came from Africa, we had, still have, an oral tradition. (Sollors 318)

Hence, oral history may be especially appropriate for understanding the journey of African Americans. A number of historians have described the benefits of oral history in broadening our understanding of all non-elites, including ethnic minorities, women, and the elderly in particular. Most subjects in this study belong to all three of these groups.

Alex Haley noted that history has “predominantly been written by the winners, which messes it up from the very beginning” (287). *Roots*, Haley’s gripping account of the black branch of his family’s ancestry, awakened the world to the power of oral testimony in revealing the realities of ordinary life that otherwise were destined for burial in the official versions of history.

Memory is living history, the remembered past that exists in the present. In one sense, it is a force that can be tapped, unleashed, and mobilized through oral and public history to stand as an alternative to imposed orthodoxy and officially sanctioned versions of historical reality; it is a route to a broadly distributed authority for making new sense of the past in the present. (Frisch xxiii)

A side benefit of oral history devolves to the interviewees themselves. Because the subjects are generally elderly, the process can help to integrate their past life experiences, recapture their dignity and self-confidence, and enhance understanding between generations (Gluck 223, Thompson 18).

History can be viewed as our collective memory of the past. Both stark facts and subjective feelings are important in understanding any issue, and both are susceptible to change in memory. The oral historian has the advantage of being able to question and

clarify the remembered information, probing the interviewee to recall both the facts and how he or she *felt* about a matter. This process is especially necessary when the individual has lived in a society that rewards conformity to the majority view, which is quite likely the case for black teachers in the United States through 1957 (the ending year of this study). Although formal questionnaires have been used frequently to ascertain people's thoughts and feelings, they cannot match the flexibility of a person-to-person dialog.

In the telling of life stories, people reaffirm them, modify them, and even create new ones to fit different life situations (Clandinin and Connelly 415). Memory can be treacherous indeed; but the problem is not confined to informants speaking years after the incident or time in question. Aside from artifacts such as pottery and bones, the two categories of historical evidence available to *any* researcher are written documents and oral testimony. Both types of evidence

derive from humans who have biases and prejudices, selective perceptions and memories, incomplete and limited powers of observation, and fallible memories. Further, people undergo changes over time and are subject to external influences and manipulations and, as such, are mirrors of their time and environment. (Okihiro 198)

Written records limit the researcher to the words on the page, unless access to the author is possible. Oral histories promote the opportunity for a more complete and accurate picture, particularly because spontaneous dialog tends to be more genuine than labored words on paper.

Thompson devoted a large section of his work to the examination of memory, drawing on social psychology and gerontology. In testing people of average intelligence, it was found that

a decline of memory sets in by the age of thirty and continues very slowly, but is never drastic before either terminal illness or senility is reached. Thus the problem of memory power is not much more serious for interviews with old

people in normal health than it is with younger adults. With this process of declining power in all adults the recent memory is first affected. (113)

Because the present research dealt with earlier rather than recent memory and none of the subjects appeared to be suffering from senility, one can feel reasonably confident that their memories were quite accurate. As a matter of fact, their recall of details was impressive. Known discrepancies will be addressed in Chapter VI, "Discussion."

As a test of a subject's memory, it is wise to begin interviews with noncontroversial matters that have been verified in advance by the researcher from other sources. This type of question establishes the interviewer's familiarity with the topic to be discussed and helps the respondent transfer mentally and emotionally to the period under study (Shafer 82). Although informants may not deliberately mislead, a well-informed interviewer can challenge questionable assertions with understanding.

Nevertheless, it must be kept in mind that, regardless of the factual or outward truth, the individual's *perception* of the truth is important. That perception may not coincide with historical reality; and researchers, of course, cannot recreate the past in order to test a hypothesis. Oral historians often work not with facts per se but with testimony on facts, reactions aroused by supposed facts, and interpretations of experiences—all of which make a subject's memories socially important, if not literally true, and valuable for their symbolic meaning (Shafer 4, Grele 3-4, Thompson 106-107). In her biography of President Lyndon Johnson, Doris Kearns revealed his propensity for altered memory and (mis)interpretation of events, but also acknowledged: "What a man like Johnson chose to remember may be even more important to understand than what really happened" (17). Tinto applied this concept to the study of the roots of student departure, emphasizing specifically the significance of student perceptions of integration into the college's academic and social communities.

Who is speaking while telling a story from the past? The story could be the interpretation of youthful experience (adult speaking) or the tale as though it were being lived at the moment (youth speaking). Research based solely on memory unaided by field texts such as diaries, photographs, and remembrances of others to corroborate an individual's story is likely to yield a current/adult rather than historical/youth voice (Clandinin and Connelly 424). The participants in this study were both asked for and provided with field texts such as yearbook information, which were used in assisting them to return to their pasts. The field texts also were helpful in understanding and interpreting the words of subjects in light of the time period during which events occurred. As any researcher must, I tried to be aware of present-mindedness—imposing today's standards on yesterday's events and tending “to oversimplify the past by viewing it strictly in terms of the present” (Cremin 1965 48). Actually, on the positive side of this dilemma, every historian necessarily views evidence “through the prism of his own culture and time,” which leads inevitably to the constant reinterpretation of history and possibly the discovery of new patterns seen with new eyes (Shafer 147).

Quite naturally, the word “pattern” springs forth repeatedly from the literature on oral history, which is more an art than an exact science (Baum 6). It was hoped that the present research would uncover patterns both within and across individuals' personal experiences that could be arranged, as by an artist, onto a new canvas that would reveal simultaneously their freshness and their familiarity. By showing people trying to make sense of their lives at a variety of points in time and in a variety of ways, and by opening this individual process to view, an oral history can reveal patterns that bring new understanding to our interpretation of the wider culture.

Interviews can be “a means of conveying the uniqueness and integrity of individual lives, while at the same time broadening the research base upon which our

understanding of general patterns is predicated” (J. Hall 189-190). The interviewer can help people to perceive the patterns in their own lives, which they may not always see on their own because the patterns, being so central to their experience, are taken for granted (G. Tuchman 311). It is apparent from the art of painting that large, complex patterns can be appreciated best from a distance. Likewise, history

can reveal unintended consequences by taking a long time-frame for evaluation; . . . it offers the possibility of “meta-analysis,” . . . stepping back from a particular period or reform and asking about broad, underlying conditions which might have produced cycles of change or persistent forms of continuity. (Tyack 409)

The present study was designed to seek the common patterns in unique lives that, until now, were unseen. Thompson asserted that a historical interpretation “becomes credible when the pattern of evidence is consistent, and is drawn from more than one viewpoint” (212-213). The discoveries made through the viewpoints of more than two dozen people were expected to balance and enrich the existing research. I anticipated uncovering patterns, discovering meaning, providing a historical view of a particular period, and preserving an oral history of African Americans’ perceptions of their lives at Montclair State Teachers College.

A final point on method concerns the researcher’s signature or voice. In oral history, the interviewer plays an integral role in presenting the story. Therefore, much of this document is written in the first person and must necessarily contain my personal stamp. My expectation was that, while understanding the constraints of society during the years under study, my natural sympathies would lie with the interviewees rather than with the institution or society at large. That expectation proved true and those sympathies undoubtedly colored the direction of the interviews and the presentation of findings.

Process

Narrative can be distinguished from structural history in that “its arrangement is descriptive rather than analytical” and “its central focus is on man not circumstances. It therefore deals with the particular and specific rather than the collective and statistical” (Stone 3-4). It has become important to historians to ascertain what it was like to live in the past and what was happening in the minds of those individuals; this sort of discovery process is appropriate for a study of the experiences of African American teacher aspirants.

Diane Garner, a qualitative researcher, described various narrative devices for telling a story, one of which is oral history. Such a narrative may address one institution as “the focus of study, in order to illuminate important findings about . . . the entire broader social unit” (Ely 173). Her description aptly fits the study at one institution, Montclair State Teachers College.

The mere telling of a story is not history; all points of view are not equally legitimate; and every thought is not worth preserving. If the interviewee regards the dialog as a platform for self-aggrandizement alone, his or her thoughts generally will not expand our understanding of historical reality. The tape recorder has been described as “a monster with the appetite of a tapeworm” that contributes to “an artificial survival of trivia of appalling proportions” (B. Tuchman 76). The obligation of a researcher is to cull the petty from the precious, polishing the worthwhile and placing it into a meaningful context that has been established through researching and understanding the social and political events of the time period.

In preparation for this written story, videotaped interviews were held with self-selected individuals who were students from 1927 through 1957, when Montclair was a single-purpose institution for the training of teachers. If a subject was unwilling to be

videotaped or lived too far away to make it practical, the interview was audiotaped in person or by telephone. If neither kind of taping was acceptable or feasible, subjects wrote out their answers to questions. Videotaping takes advantage of current technology that will enable future researchers to have the benefit of all verbal and physical clues to possible meanings behind literal words. The videotaped record preserves more authentically than words on paper the totality of an interviewee's responses.

Of the 28 subjects in this study, 23 were videotaped. A consent form (see Appendix B) that included approval of taping was given to each participant prior to the interview and was open to revision by our mutual agreement. The Human Subjects Committee of New York University approved the interview process in its entirety, including the use of videotape and transcription.

The interviews were used "to develop a picture, rather than study cause-effect relationships" (Creswell 98). The picture emerged through responses, interwoven with information gained by other means. As expected, each interview generated additional questions and provided insights that could be explored with later interviewees and raised in follow-up meetings with previous participants.

Interviews were used to examine changes, if any, in students' goals and commitments relative to a teaching career and their integration into the academic and social communities of Montclair State Teachers College, as evidenced by their documented involvement in various campus activities and by their own words. (The interview questions are provided in Appendix C.) The questions were developed with the goal of drawing out information related to Tinto's model of student retention/departure as well as other data deemed useful in understanding the experiences of students at Montclair.

Although not all questions were asked of all participants, using essentially the same questions provided for a comparison among respondents. Also, the use of specific questions triggered thoughts that could be expanded in the subjects' unstructured recollections. There were opportunities for all interviewees to focus on issues of importance to them, whether stimulated by my queries or not.

In analyzing responses, attention was given to differences in the views of those who were on campus in various years, residents versus commuters, men versus women, and so on. Although a difference was expected between full- and part-timers, there turned out to be no part-timers.

Selection of Interviewees

Scrutiny of the yearbooks, *La Campana*, and word of mouth references revealed approximately 61 black alumni from the period under study, 1927 through 1957. The figure is approximate because one book is missing (1929); not all students were photographed for the yearbook; and not all African Americans are visually identifiable. Of the 61 alumni who were identified, at least 18 were deceased, leaving a possible pool of 43. Of these remaining 43, the whereabouts of many were unknown. Finding students who did not complete the program was even more difficult in that they are not featured in the yearbooks, except occasionally in group photographs. By word of mouth, a few were located and invited to take part in the study, but none accepted the invitation. A list of the 61 African American students from this period as well as preceding years is in Appendix E.

By way of comparison, a similar investigation was made of yearbooks at two private colleges in the area. At Stevens Institute in Hoboken, an all-male college, there were no African American faculty pictured and only one student (class of 1937) during

the entire 30-year period. The lone black student was very active in campus activities, including the “oldest secret honorary engineering society in the United States” (*Link* 1936 155). At Seton Hall University in South Orange, the first black student is shown in 1948. In subsequent years, the numbers varied but always included at least two and as many as 12 for each year through 1957, although information is incomplete because the yearbook was not published during nine of those years. The first black faculty member appears in the 1946 yearbook, and three other new faculty or staff members are shown in 1951, 1955, and 1957 (*The White and Blue*, *The Blue and White*, *The Galleon*).

An in-depth analysis is beyond the scope of this study, but it appears that black students were not recruited at Stevens, and were late in attaining admission at Seton Hall. However, once they began enrolling at Seton Hall, their number increased more quickly than at Montclair. Fifty-five percent of the black students whose hometowns are listed were from Newark, Jersey City, or the Oranges, from which Seton Hall was easily accessible by public transportation.

My objective in this study was to conduct as many interviews as possible with both male and female African Americans who were students at Montclair State Teachers College from 1927 through 1957. Therefore, a random sample was not appropriate. Instead, a convenience sample was used. Tull and Albaum define convenience samples as those “selected not by judgment or probability techniques but because the elements in a fraction of the population can be reached conveniently. There is no attempt made to have a representative sample” (38). Attinasi used a convenience sample for his own similar study of Mexican American students, for which he deemed representativeness unimportant because his purpose was to discover, rather than to validate, “the patterns in a process as it naturally occurs and is understood” (252). Murguía used the same approach. For the present study, the small number of potential interviewees made

convenience sampling most reasonable. In fact, it was quite “convenient” that the oldest known living black graduate of Montclair State was a student in 1927, the beginning point of this study, and that she was eager to participate in the research.

In addition, four white people who were fellow students with the black interviewees and who later became faculty and administrators at Montclair were interviewed. As was the case with the WPA oral histories of slaves (Rawick 170), having the remembrance of white informants provided a different and valuable perspective on particular issues. The questions asked of white participants were similar to those asked of African Americans, but geared in some sections toward what they thought the experiences of their black peers would have been.

Finally, informal talks were held with several white alumnae who graduated from the Montclair State Normal School before the period under study—the earliest year of graduation represented was 1916. In addition, family members of a small number of deceased black alumni from the period under study were able to provide information about their relatives’ experiences. Participants in the oral history project were solicited in the following specific ways.

- I submitted a letter to the editor of the Montclair State University alumni publication that briefly described the proposed study and requested volunteers.
- On my behalf, the president of MSU wrote to the superintendents of eight local school districts that have high minority populations. The letter described the proposed study and requested identification of African American teachers who were alumni of Montclair State Teachers College in order to invite their participation. (This request did not produce any usable results.)

- Active alumni who graduated at least 50 years ago were informed of the project, and their participation or identification of prospective participants was solicited, at a special reception during “Alumni Weekend” in May 1996.
- Although no official records have been found regarding the race of students during the period in question, yearbooks provided clues through photographs. Black alumni identified in this manner, and not included in one of the groups described above, were contacted by letter to request their participation.
- Respondents were asked to distribute the letter of solicitation to additional prospects, including black students who dropped out before completing the program. (This suggestion did not produce any results.)
- Four white alumni from the period under study volunteered or agreed to be interviewed to provide corroborative or alternative views.

Interviewer Effects

A conversation is necessarily affected by the relationship that develops between the speakers. In response to the suggestion that an interviewer’s ideas and the kind of relationship that emerges during the interview must have an impact on the words spoken, the prolific oral historian Studs Terkel replied: “Right. Now something happens in the interview, of course” (Grele 32-33). I wanted to be aware of the “somethings” that could happen.

Cultural likeness has been found to promote trust and openness between researcher and interviewee, and the lack of such likeness may have the opposite effect (Gluck 227). With someone of the same ethnicity, “the participant has no need to continuously explain himself or herself” (Murguía 436). I did not share the similarity of race with most of my subjects, but I did make a conscientious effort to establish

confidence based, as appropriate, on shared gender (female), institutional affiliation (my two degrees from MSU), and my professional work as executive assistant to the university's second African American president (who subsequently assumed the presidency of another university).

A less obvious likeness has effected a feeling of kinship on my part toward any person who may be out of the mainstream of American life. My parents met in Europe—my father, an American on a two-year business assignment in Germany, married my mother, a Dane who worked for her government in Germany after World War II. They eventually settled in New Jersey, where we lived in a three-family house in Montclair. Because the other tenants were a black family and a biracial family (black-white), I was introduced to diversity from earliest memory.

My older sister and I spoke Danish. When I was three years old, we moved to a nearby town and met neighborhood children who spoke only English. I have clear recollections of dismay and discomfort in being unable to communicate. We spoke differently and our family customs were not always the same. I felt myself to be an outsider although I could not articulate it at the time. These experiences established within me, from a very young age, empathy for others who are different in any way. I believed my natural compassion would win over any skeptical African American participants.

I specifically asked two black subjects, following our meetings, if my race had inhibited them from speaking freely or had otherwise affected the interview. The male said no, and the female said yes, but only to the extent that she felt obliged to explain some matters to me in detail that would have been understood without explanation by a black interviewer. A third black subject, when asked at the end of the interview if she would like to share any additional observations that would be useful in my understanding

the experiences of African Americans at Montclair, replied: “I don’t believe so, because it’s just like the old Indian saying: ‘My shoes—you have to walk in them.’ And that’s the only way you would know. I can’t think of anything else, just as I cannot imagine being white.”⁶⁰ And another black female commented, “It’s just in the past few years where things have not been open and welcome. *It’s hard for me to explain to you.*”

I hoped my genuine respect and admiration for teachers would help to create rapport, overcome any lingering suspicion or mistrust, and encourage all the participants to see the value of their contributions to society—many women, in particular, are reluctant to be interviewed if they do not perceive themselves as having made public contributions to the world (Gluck 228). In fact, it was a constant struggle for me not to be biased in favor of my subjects and to analyze as objectively as possible the information relayed by them. As suspected, a temptation was to “protect” them instead of dealing with all their revealed experiences.

My continued connection to the institution could have been seen as a liability rather than an asset by some interviewees. A perceived “pro-MSU” position might have prevented some from candidly expressing negative feelings and experiences. In my explanatory letter and in person, I made every effort to assure interviewees that—for the benefit of their alma mater and of higher education as a whole—I wished to know both the pluses and the minuses of their campus experiences. My efforts may have been overdone because several subjects worried about not being able to accommodate what they regarded as my need to hear negative tales.

⁶⁰ She then gave a hint of the hardship of her life as an African American by adding: “But I do tell God, ‘If you send me back black again, you’d better make me rich!’”

Thompson found that in the final stage in the development of memory, at the end of life, there is commonly a sudden emergence of memories

and of desire to remember, and a special candour which goes with a feeling that active life is over . . . an increased willingness to remember, and . . . diminished concern with fitting the story to the social norms of the audience. Thus bias from both repression and distortion becomes a less inhibiting difficulty, for both teller and historian. (113)

Inasmuch as all participants in this study were at least 60 years old, it was hoped that they would express the willingness described by Thompson to tell their stories without regard for consequences. Also, of course, individuals who volunteer to participate presumably accept from the start the importance of a project and thus generally can be expected to share honestly their experiences and feelings. There is no reason not to believe this to have been the case with all 28 subjects.

Rationale for Questions

Each of the questions posed to participants was crafted carefully to address information relevant to the research questions. The interview questions as a whole are included as Appendix C. Each subject received the list of questions prior to the interview for preparation purposes. During the actual interview, questions were skipped if a particular topic had been addressed sufficiently already. Also, when the conversation veered in a different direction, a question was sometimes passed over inadvertently. Unscripted questions were asked during the interview depending on previous responses. The final part of the interview was totally open-ended. Follow-up calls were undertaken when necessary.

Tinto's model was used as a platform from which to begin eliciting remembrances related to integration and community. The present study was not an attempt to validate his model or to impose it on subjects whose college experiences

occurred before his work began, but the model was an excellent place to start. It contains six sections in the following order: pre-entry attributes, goals/commitments (I), institutional experiences, integration, goals/commitments (II), and outcome.

A. Outcome

After an introductory statement regarding date, location, participants, and purpose of the interview, the first questions concerned the last section of the model, *outcome*. Because these questions were intended to gather factual and nonthreatening information on the basic outcome of the campus experience, they were expected to be the least sensitive and thus to help put the person at ease. Establishing rapport is important before questioning a subject about matters that may be more controversial and require emotional, nonverifiable responses (Shafer 82). The initial questions sought name and maiden name (if different), years of study at Montclair, degree earned, major and minor, first teaching position (when, where, and races of students), subsequent degrees, and career path.

B. Goals and Commitments (I)

The first time *goals and commitments* were addressed, the questions related to students' intentions upon entering the institution, their institutional commitments, and their external commitments, as follows:

- Strength of desire to teach.
- Career expectations: Teaching, ministry, medicine, and law were the traditional professions open to blacks—but not necessarily with equal opportunity to practice the profession within the state. Did graduates of the teachers college actually expect to find positions in the state, or did they have alternate plans? How committed were they to attaining the goal of a teaching career?

- Inspiration to teach and role models: Who sparked the student's desire to become a teacher? In a 1991 study of the teaching profession as perceived by African Americans (Page and Page 8-9), family members were identified by 42.6% as being influential in a student's decision to teach. High school teachers were identified by 20.8% and elementary school teachers by 15.1%. Cross reported that black college students attribute major influence to high school teachers and counselors (K. Cross 128). (She also wondered how African Americans who did *not* go to college would have responded. It is possible that they, too, were influenced—but in a discouraging direction.) When Astin asked minority educators about factors that facilitated their completion of an undergraduate degree (not a teacher education program specifically), they were most likely to mention the encouragement and support of their families along with their personal educational goals and interests (1982 184).

- Commitment to attending this particular college: Tinto found that the greater one's commitment to the institution attended and willingness to work toward the attainment of one's goals in that institution, the greater the likelihood of persistence in that school (1987 45).

- Tuition: How did they finance their education? Economic factors may have been significant in both the decision to attend a state college and the progress made toward graduation, particularly during the Depression of the 1930s.

- Other commitments or responsibilities at home or at a job: Astin found that minority students who enter college expecting to work full time at an off-campus job are much less likely to obtain a degree than are other students. However, part-time work was found to facilitate persistence, particularly if the student works on campus (1982 183). Family responsibilities also might have been burdens for some of the participants in this study.

C. Institutional Experiences

The part of the model dealing with *institutional experiences* is divided into academic and social systems, and each is divided further into formal and informal interactions. The academic system involves academic performance (formal) and faculty/staff interactions (informal), whereas the social system includes extracurricular activities (formal) and peer group interactions (informal).

Two introductory questions evoked a general picture of a typical day and a confirmation of full- or part-time status. Full-time students would have had a more continuous academic and social experience, including more time to explore opportunities. This question also elicited confirmation or elaboration of a prior question about other responsibilities. The next questions were grouped according to academic and social experiences on campus as follows.

- Academic performance: Tinto found, in studying the entering college cohort of 1972, that rates of departure were higher for blacks than for whites. However, controlling for differences in ability and social status changed the association dramatically; the rate of departure then was higher for whites (1987 28-29). Because minority students often graduate from high schools that provide poor preparation, they are more likely to experience academic difficulty in college. Incongruence can result from a student's feeling of not fitting into the intellectual fabric of the campus and can lead to departure. This question addressed the formal aspect of the academic system.
- Comfort level and acceptance in the classroom (informal aspect of the academic system).
- Encouragement to think and feel in the past: People interpret events differently over the passage of time due to intervening experiences, the wisdom of age, and the desire to make sense of what has happened to them. This question was an attempt to

have the interviewee consider how he or she truly felt during college. It was included in the midst of questions regarding institutional experiences as a change of pace and a nudge to think and feel in the past.

- Faculty and other staff members: Responses to this question were expected to shed light on the student's informal academic experiences, including the presence or lack of supportive faculty and staff mentors. Astin found that among the chief barriers to degree completion were faculty composition and attitudes that had a negative impact on the student (1982 184).

- Discussion of important social issues: A particular issue was the discussion of racial matters either inside or outside the classroom.

- Interaction of students with faculty and staff outside the classroom: Chickering found that when individual faculty members and administrators talk with students in a more than perfunctory way, the entire student culture is stimulated and challenged as students discuss the adults' behavior, views, and values (278). Were African Americans at MSTC involved in the interactions? This question provided another way of asking about the inclusion of black students in the college's academic life.

- Practice teaching, including the races of pupils and cooperating teacher: Restrictions, if any, on the schools in which black students could practice certainly would have had an impact on their perceptions of academic experiences.

- Involvement in extracurricular activities: Tinto stated that social integration may be influenced more among black students than among white students by formal associations such as serving on a campuswide or departmental committee (1987 71). *La Campana*, the yearbook, shows that African American students were officers and members of their classes, the Student Government Association, clubs, and Greek organizations. This question provided participants with an opportunity to discuss these

activities in their own words rather than my relying solely on yearbook data for bare facts.

- Knowledge of other African American students on campus: Although some recent research supports the value or necessity of separate campus organizations for African Americans (Fleming 1993, Spitzberg and Thorndike), there appears not to have been a sufficient number of black students at Montclair to create them during the period under study. This question established the accuracy of respondents' perceptions of the number of black students on campus, measured against the approximate number known to have been there.
- Where they lived while attending Montclair State, and whether students of all races and ethnicities felt welcomed in the residence halls: Astin discovered that commuter institutions do not offer minority students the educational opportunities of residential colleges. In addition, increased time spent on campus increases the chances for academic success. "Students who live away from home while attending college are more likely to persist to baccalaureate completion than those who live at home with their parents; this is especially true for Blacks" (Astin 1982 152, 183). Commuters tend to be less involved in the institution's intellectual as well as social life, ultimately trailing their residential peers in both learning and personal development (Tinto 1987 70, Bowen 248 quoting Chickering). Jencks and Riesman concurred: "Even a superb academic program is unlikely to move most students very far if they return every night to home and mother" (182-183).
- Relationships with other students in activities outside the classroom: Social incongruence occurs when students feel at odds with their peers. This is another of the critical factors identified by Tinto regarding the likelihood of departure (1987 54-55).

- Student dating experiences: Did they date other students? Where did they first meet each other? If black students had to look off campus to find dates, their social experiences would not have been equivalent to those of white students.
- Local restaurants or places of entertainment attended: A white alumna who was not a formal interviewee stated that because a black classmate went to the local theater with a group of white students in the mid-1930s, all of them were obliged to sit in the balcony rather than in the orchestra section. Did the opportunity to experience town life change over time?
- Racist incidents: Did they or their acquaintances encounter specific incidents of prejudice or racism? This question provided an opportunity to amplify previous stories, offer new examples, or deny the occurrence of such incidents.

D. Integration

As with institutional experiences, Tinto addressed *integration* in terms of the academic and the social. He noted that African American students are more likely than whites to enter college with academic deficiencies due to inferior schooling (likely leading to less academic integration). Astin and Cross made similar points in noting that higher education, while not necessarily institutionally racist, favors the best-prepared students and that the preparation of most minority students for college is relatively inadequate—certainly due to past racism. Students from poor schools may have good records on paper because they performed well by the standards of their own schools, which can place them in academic difficulty when competing with college students from more affluent high schools (Astin 1985 99).

It may be recalled from Chapter II, “Historical Background,” that one of Montclair’s black presidents, Irvin Reid, graduated second in a segregated high school

class of 600 in South Carolina. He provided an example of the phenomenon cited above by describing the educational healing he received at Howard University.

[Howard] nurtured whatever wounds that may have caused me without making me feel a victim—because I never felt victimized. But I think that if I had gone to the University of Pennsylvania, I would not have gotten the same sort of nurturing for the healing that was necessary for having grown up in a segregated society. I mean, segregated society does leave you a harmed individual, and the saddest part of it all is that you don't know the extent of the harm that's caused. You're not aware of it. It is later in life that I think that lack of awareness that people have as they go into a situation where perhaps those around them may not know the pain that they may have suffered or the harm they may have endured—may not know that, that I think probably causes the kind of irreparable damage. And I think that Howard prevented me from suffering that. It did not make me ever allow myself to be a victim, and yet it knew that I had deficiencies.⁶¹

Marion Bolden '68—newly appointed superintendent of the Newark Public Schools at the time of this writing and a product of the Newark schools herself—was the only African American mathematics major in her class at Montclair. In an interview with *Alumni Life* (Winter 2000 3), she said:

I recognized as a freshman that I wasn't as prepared as other kids. I struggled at first, especially with the writing. When you go to an urban school, you are disadvantaged. You just don't know it. I never knew that I was fairly poor until I went to college.

Ironically, poorly-prepared minority urban children may have high self-esteem because they believe they are doing well, whereas low-performing white suburban school children, who in reality may be better prepared for college work, feel bad about their abilities in comparison to their peers (K. Cross 24).

The situation noted above may not have pertained at Montclair State during the years under study because students were admitted based not only on the high school academic record but also on a state entrance test administered at the college, so that all

⁶¹ Interview on 5/27/97.

admitted students presumably had the required academic qualifications. However, it could explain the low number of black students admitted in the first place if they were applying from schools that were inferior and thus did not prepare them well enough to pass the entrance examination. Also, African American students have had relatively fewer choices concerning membership in social organizations, and thus less social integration.

Tinto argued that “some form of integration—that is, some type of social and/or intellectual membership in at least one college community—is a minimum condition for continued persistence” (1987 121). Although critical mass may be missing in predominantly white institutions, minority students must be able to find a niche and form a viable community in some subculture in order to persist. The questions addressed:

- Opportunity generally given to be a full participant in classes: Did the student participate in class discussions and activities (intellectual integration)? In 1933 Carter G. Woodson, a graduate of Harvard, referred to the “lynching in the classroom” that created an inhospitable climate there (Wilson 88).
- Acceptance in the social life of the college: Many details of social life would have been discussed earlier in the interview. This question sought an overall assessment of the former student’s feeling of social integration and full acceptance. In 1935 W. E. B. DuBois, another Harvard alumnus, faulted “certain northern universities where Negro students . . . cannot get fair recognition, either in the classroom or on the campus, in dining hall or student activities, or in common courtesy” (Wilson 88).
- Sense of belonging to a community or family on campus: Those who graduated somehow managed to navigate “white” territory successfully. If they did feel themselves to be full members of a community, was it the college in its entirety or a subgroup? If they did not, was their isolation imposed by self (perhaps feeling the pressure of solely

representing their race), or by racial incidents, or by a sense of danger in a hostile world, or by a fear of being discovered as an “impostor” who did not belong in this strange environment?

Fannie Jackson Coppin wrote in 1913 about her experience at the predominantly white Oberlin College: “I felt that I had the honor of the whole African race upon my shoulders. I felt that should I fail, it would be ascribed to the fact that I was colored” (Wilson 87). Even 80 years later, such feelings persisted. A student at the University of Oklahoma in 1993 said that “because there are so few blacks on campus, we have to be ambassadors all of the time” (Wilson 95). Some students are able to see their position as a positive opportunity “to be representative of my [group] as something good and that society will see that” (Murguía 439). Still, Attinasi found that a sense of belonging, of interaction with others, is important in assisting students to develop “specific strategies for negotiating the physical, social, and cognitive/academic geographies” (267). Were my subjects able to build personal networks?

- Assistance in finding a teaching position: Were black students on their own in the job search? Were they given help in locating employment, or even directed toward specific schools or districts? All catalogs up to and including the 1938-40 edition stated that students were required to promise to teach within the state immediately following graduation—initially for two years and later for three. The penalty for failing to teach in New Jersey, absent an excuse from the state Board of Education for temporary deferment, was payment of the cost of one’s education that had been borne by the state. How many black students were “excused” because they were not offered jobs? Was their treatment at the end of the college career the same as that accorded their white classmates? As noted in a 1933 national survey of the education of black teachers:

Under normal conditions the number of available [teaching] positions may be accepted as a measure of demand. This is not a reliable index as far as the Negro is concerned. An even more important factor is the number of positions that would be available if educational opportunities for Negroes were increased until they were comparable to those provided for other groups. (Caliver 58)

E. Goals and Commitments (II)

This section revisited the *goals and commitments* that were explored earlier in the context of a student's initial college expectations. Now, after various institutional experiences including integration or lack thereof, those goals and commitments might have changed. "Though the intentions and commitments with which individuals enter college matter, what goes on after entry matters more" and "in large measure determine[s] decisions as to staying or leaving" (Tinto 1987 127). My questions related to the following points:

- Any change in intention to become a teacher: Other things being equal, rates of departure would probably be lower in professional preparatory programs, such as teacher education, than they might be "in general study programs where such linkages are less distinct" (Tinto 1987 111).

- Consideration of, or actually, attending other colleges: If students considered attending another college but stayed at Montclair, their reasons for staying were explored. If a student attended another college previously, an attempt was made to determine the differences in the experiences.

- Any change in external responsibilities: Work or family responsibilities that increased or decreased during the college years may have influenced campus life to a greater extent than feelings of integration or community. It was important not to overlook the obvious in a search for clues regarding the less evident.

- Knowledge of other students who did not remain enrolled and their reasons for dropping out: Finding dropouts was extremely difficult. Because records on race were

not kept, the only ways to locate African American students were through yearbook photos and word of mouth. Dropouts generally were not pictured in the yearbooks except in club photos. Through word of mouth, some dropouts were named. Finding them was another matter!

F. Pre-entry Attributes

Although Tinto placed the section of his model dealing with *pre-entry attributes* first, in this study such questions were asked at the end of the interview under the assumption that participants would be more inclined to divulge personal family matters after rapport had been firmly established.

- Family background: The first two questions were intended to reveal the student's home living situation and the employment level of the parents. Three rough categories were established for parental employment—unskilled, skilled, and professional—in order to have a point of reference in analyzing various issues such as a student's economic needs and motivation to teach.

- Parental education: If the parents and/or siblings had not attended college, was there anyone who guided the student in understanding what a basically white college would be like—the culture, expected behavior, and structure of an average day? Cues given by someone who has attended college provide students with “information about how one [goes] about being a college student, about negotiating the college campus” (Attinasi 257).

- High school: Participants were queried about where they went to high school, what they saw as their best talents and interests in high school, and who encouraged them to attend college or specifically to become a teacher. These questions were asked in an attempt to elicit some description of the high school years in racial, economic, academic,

and experiential terms as well as to assess motivation and serve as a cross-check on earlier questions regarding goals and commitments.

G. Summary

The *summary* section of the interview was designed partially for the gathering of specific information and partially to provide respondents with stimulants to reflect on other thoughts and feelings not captured in the questions that would shed light on their internal and external experiences at Montclair. Interviewees were asked to consider how much of their perception of campus life they believed was shared by other African American students; what were the high and low points and the most important changes that occurred during their college years; how much contact had been maintained with the institution and their classmates; what grades they would assign their education and their nonacademic experiences; and whether or not they would choose a teaching career if they could start over.

H. Unstructured Recollections

Each session ended with a final invitation to discuss anything else that had not been covered to that point. The director of the WPA Federal Writers' Project, in which slave narratives and other life stories were collected using oral history, suggested several interviewing techniques that proved advantageous in the present research. They included using specific questions only as a beginning and not necessarily asking every person every question; letting the talk "run to all subjects"; using stories already told to derive other questions; taking "care not to influence the point of view of the informant" while asking about other possible circumstances if a one-sided picture is painted; weaving specific questions naturally into the conversation; and not censoring any material (Rawick 173-174).

Transcription

Depending on the purpose of the oral history, a researcher may decide to have the interview transcribed in various ways, including the following:

- verbatim in standard English
- verbatim with dialectal (phonetic) spelling
- without filler words such as “uh”
- with bracketed information such as *[laughing]*
- edited to capture the intent if not the literal words, because spoken language is

never as precise as written language and tends to make the speaker appear unlearned in print

- with words reassembled within sentences and even within whole sections to provide coherence and chronological order
- condensed.

An interviewer concerned with language itself might select a straight verbatim transcript, whereas someone interested in the subject’s general recollection of an event might choose a condensed transcript. For this study, verbatim transcripts were prepared in standard English, with bracketed and italicized editorial information.

Interviewees were asked to review the draft transcript for accuracy and to sign their approval on the final transcript. As approved by the subjects, the original videotapes, audiotapes, and transcripts are archived in the Montclair State University library. Each subject was offered a copy of the tape(s) and transcript. Selected sections of the interviews have been included in Chapter V, “Findings,” and Chapter VI, “Discussion.” Using the participants’ own words as much as possible minimizes misinterpretation.

Reliability and Validity

In oral history, reliability is “the consistency with which an individual will tell the same story about the same events on a number of different occasions” (Hoffman 69). Reliability was gauged by rephrasing questions during the interview and following up when necessary with subsequent visits or telephone calls to clarify any unclear statements.

Validity is “the degree of conformity between the reports of the event and the event itself as recorded by other primary resource material such as documents, photographs, diaries, and letters” (Hoffman 69). Interviewees were asked to permit my review of their relevant personal documents (“field texts”)—including college papers and grade transcripts—for comparison and further information. In addition, in accordance with the guidelines of the Oral History Association, the interview transcripts were compared with existing nonpersonal documents (see below) to determine the validity of the objective components of interviewees’ statements.

In compiling any history, the writer must examine primary sources whenever possible, including the participants in events. The writer “cannot sit geographically, mentally and socially removed from the society being discussed and expect to report accurately what is taking place there” (Simmons 1). Thus, access to the people who lived during the period under investigation is crucial to obtaining the most accurate picture possible. All of the oral histories (primary sources) have been interwoven with information garnered through written documents (both primary and secondary) concerning campus and national policies and events.

The student newspaper and yearbook were primary sources that contained a wealth of information on how students lived and saw their own lives in relation to the institution. At Montclair, these publications had faculty advisors under the general

supervision of the dean of instruction (Partridge 1983 47), but it appears that students had wide latitude in the contents of these writings. On the one hand, the views presented therein are likely to be authentic (if narrow) rather than the voice of the administration. On the other hand, they tend to contain factual and other errors given the students' inexperience, and therefore statements were verified when possible through different sources. Sifted together with other documents, the newspaper and yearbook provided very valuable information (both verbal and pictorial) on the history of the college.

Other primary and secondary data were drawn from research studies in various aspects of educational history (including studies of minority teachers); local and other newspapers; official and unofficial documents at MSU (such as annual reports, catalogs, correspondence, celebratory writings, Middle States reports, and statistics from the registrar and computer center); and national data on black students in teacher education programs. Because information on minority enrollment in college prior to 1960 unfortunately is meager, significant digging was required to uncover both numbers and people.

Sources external to the campus provided a sense of the cultural and political settings of students' lives; institutional documents formed the foundation for exploring their experiences on campus; and interviews provided even more frank information (or at least that perceived in memory) than what is revealed in *any* written material. Moreover, campus and other publications served as triangulation points with the interviews in putting together as accurate a picture as possible.

Data Analysis

Twenty-six interviews were taped and two people provided written responses to the questions. One subject wrote out the responses because he was away for the summer

and could not be available in person. The other was reluctant to speak of experiences that she expected to evoke bad memories. Of the 26 person-to-person interviews, three were audiotaped only (two at the request of the interviewee and one by telephone due to distance) and the remaining 23 were both audiotaped and videotaped.

Half (13) of the 26 person-to-person interviews were conducted in the respondent's home. Eleven were held on the campus of Montclair State University. One took place at another site off campus and one was conducted by telephone. The interviews resulted in transcripts ranging in length from 17 to 44 pages. Follow-up calls were made to all respondents for clarification and/or further information; these comments were not taped or included in the transcript.

Each of the 26 agreed to have the tape(s) archived in the university library for the use of future researchers. Each subject reviewed and approved the final written transcript and all but one agreed to have it archived along with the tape(s). All 28 respondents, including the two whose responses were written rather than spoken, gave permission to have their comments quoted in this document.

Transcripts were examined through the use of qualitative content analysis: "a systematic procedure for describing the content of communications . . . [through] the simultaneous coding of raw data and constructing [of] categories that capture relevant characteristics of the document's content" (Merriam 116-117). Qualitative content analysis involves documenting and understanding the communication of meaning in a systematic but not rigid manner, with the expectation that categories at first unknown will emerge throughout the study (Merriam 117). After all, the purpose of such research is to make new discoveries. "Time is the river historians fish in, and it sometimes brings surprises" (Tyack 412).

Each transcript was identified by a code signifying the respondent's race (B or W), gender (M or F), year of graduation, major and minor, commuter vs. resident status (C or R), and parental occupation (U = unskilled, S = skilled, P = professional). Answers to the questions asked of all respondents were compared in an attempt to discover patterns and changes in the lives of black students at Montclair State Teachers College.

An initial list of response categories was created based on the interview questions. Because the questions were developed with great care to address specific aspects of experience, they yielded easily to categorization as indicated below. Each category was color coded as shown.

- A. Outcome [blue]
 - 1. Degree earned and years spent at the college
 - 2. Major and minor
 - 3. When teaching began
 - 4. First teaching position
 - 5. Career path
 - 6. Other education
 - 7. Salary
- B. Goals and commitments (I) [green]
 - 1. Motivation for teaching
 - 2. Career expectations
 - 3. Inspiration to teach and role models
 - 4. Application to other colleges and why Montclair was selected
 - 5. Tuition rate
 - 6. Financing of education and outside commitments
- C. Institutional experiences [orange]
 - 1. Typical day
 - 2. Full- or part-time status
 - 3. Academic performance
 - 4. Feelings in the classroom (see D-1)
 - 5. Self-assessment of reliability of feelings
 - 6. Faculty and staff members
 - 7. Discussion of social issues
 - 8. Interaction with faculty and staff
 - 9. Practice teaching
 - 10. Involvement in extracurricular activities
 - 11. Number of African American students
 - 12. Residence and welcome in dormitory
 - 13. Social life (see D-2)

- 14. Dating
- 15. Racist incidents

- D. Integration [pink]
 - 1. Fullness of class participation (see C-3)
 - 2. Acceptance in campus social life (see C-12)
 - 3. Community/family belonging
 - 4. Assistance in locating job

- E. Goals and commitments (II) [purple]
 - 1. Change in career goal
 - 2. Transfer
 - 3. Change in outside commitments
 - 4. African American dropouts

- F. Pre-entry attributes [red]
 - 1. Family background
 - 2. Parental employment
 - 3. Parental education
 - 4. Preparation for college
 - 5. High school
 - 6. Encouragement toward college

- G. Summary [yellow]
 - 1. Perceptions shared by other black students?
 - 2. High and low points
 - 3. Important changes
 - 4. Contact with classmates and college
 - 5. Grades for education and nonacademic experiences
 - 6. Choose teaching again?

- H. Unstructured recollections [brown]

As the transcripts were analyzed, relevant sections were highlighted with the appropriate color. Each section thus highlighted was computer “cut” from the individual transcript and “pasted” into a document dealing with the category in question. Further cutting and pasting separated the various components of each section. As a result, comments from all respondents on any selected topic could be reviewed together; answers to questions could be compared according to respondents’ demographic variables; and other comparisons could be made as issues emerged from the transcripts.

Conclusion

The participants in this study shared their memories of life experiences filtered through four to seven decades of intervening events. Their thoughts and feelings are, obviously, very personal and may have been altered by the passage of time.

Nevertheless, the impact of documented external realities on their perception and development is an important facet of the history of African American teachers in northern New Jersey prior to the period of civil rights activism, and it had not been explored before. The memories of participants, in concert with written documents from the period, disclosed parts of patterns that reach from the past to enhance our understanding of the present.

“Of the many phases of the history of the American people none is filled with more dramatic experiences and impelling interest than that dealing with the struggles of the Negro to obtain an education” (Caliver 1). In sharing their personal and sometimes dramatic experiences, participants in this study have contributed to a national story that already has impelling interest.

Chapter V, “Findings,” summarizes the statements of the subjects according to each of the eight categories of questions. Chapter VI, “Discussion,” analyzes the five major concepts—racism, status attainment, community, integration (academic and social), and persistence/retention—as well as changes in the status of African Americans based on information taken from the interviews as well as other documents.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS

Introduction

There were 28 subjects in this study—six males and 22 females. Within this group were 20 black females, four black males, two white females, and two white males. The two white males both graduated in the same year (1949), as did the two white females (1943). In both cases, one subject was a commuter and the other was a resident student. For each of these two years, there was also one black subject of the same gender. Excluding one black participant who attended College High School, 10 of the 23 African Americans (43%) were resident students for at least one semester and 13 (57%) were commuters.

All four white subjects and four of the black subjects returned to the college for varying periods of time as administrators and/or faculty members, which gave them perspectives on subsequent campus experiences in addition to undergraduate life. Two of these black respondents graduated in 1959, just after the period under study. They had agreed to pilot test the questions. Because their comments were so meaty, they have been included in the analysis that follows.

One participant had entered the institution in 1926, when it was a normal school. Along with her classmates, she graduated from the two-year program during the transition to a four-year teachers college program. Another person graduated from College High School, the campus demonstration school. Although the latter subsequently returned to Montclair as a college student, the interview centered on her

experiences in the high school, which occurred during the period under study. All other respondents graduated from Montclair State Teachers College except the two “test subjects,” who graduated the year after the name was changed to Montclair State College (although it remained a teachers college).

Subjects were recruited beginning with the graduation year 1928—the first year the institution bore the name Montclair State Teachers College. All of the participants are graduates, despite a concerted effort to interview dropouts. Some dropouts were identified and located, but they did not agree to be interviewed. The respondents (excluding the 1952 College High School graduate) represent the following graduation classes (B = black, W = white, F = female, M = male):

<i>Year</i>	<i>Subjects</i>	<i>Total Blacks in Class</i>
1928	1 BF	2
1929	0	unknown—yearbook missing
1930	0	0
1931	0	0
1932	0	0
1933	1 BF	1
1934	1 BF	2
1935	0	1
1936	0	1
1937	0	0
1938	0	1
1939	0	0
1940	1 BM	2
1941	0	0
1942	0	1
1943	1 BF, 2 WF	1
1944	1 BF	1
1945	0	1
1946	1 BF	3
1947	0	0
1948	1 BF	3
1949	1 BM, 2 WM	6
1950	0	3
1951	1 BF	2
1952	0	5
1953	4 BF	6
1954	1 BM	2

1955	0	4
1956	2 BF, 1 BM	6
1957	3 BF	7

(Participants were not recruited for classes beyond 1957.)

1958	0	2
1959	1 BF, 1 BM	14

Following a description of the 28 interviewees, the findings are organized according to the eight categories in which the interview questions were arranged, including a final section for unstructured recollections. Due to the nature of the interviews, not every question was asked of every participant or posed in the same way to everyone, resulting in information that is not uniform across the interviews. Also, because not every respondent permitted examination of the college transcript, questions that emerged following the interviews could not be explored for every subject if they required review of specific course information.

The respondents are identified by their first names. The reader may assume a respondent is African American unless otherwise specified. The year of graduation is indicated where it will be helpful in understanding the subjects' comments.

Interviewees

Listed below in alphabetical order are the names and summarized information about each respondent with regard to year of graduation, major and minor, subsequent degrees, and career path. All jobs were in New Jersey unless otherwise noted. Asterisks (*) indicate subjects who are white. Crosses (+) indicate subjects known to have graduated with elementary certification in addition to secondary certification. A college photograph of each person can be found in Appendix D.

Jeannette Allen [Williams] '59 (English/Social Studies)—MA Seton Hall, EdD Rutgers; taught junior and senior high English; Upward Bound administrator (at Montclair State); guidance counselor; worked with Title I program; school administration.

Thelma Anderson [Courtney] '44 (English/Business Education)—MA Montclair State, work toward doctorate; government office work; taught high school social studies in Maryland and elementary in New Jersey.

Joyce Ashley '56 (Social Studies/English +)—MA Hunter, JD New York Law School; private business; taught junior high reading, elementary, high school social studies and English, and special education in New Jersey and New York; college adjunct; lawyer.

Katherine Bell [Banks] '34 (French/History)—MA Columbia, work toward doctorate; taught French at two black colleges in Georgia and Alabama and high school in New Jersey; department chair; Fulbright exchange teacher to France.

Marilyn Blackburn [Harris] '46 (Social Studies/English)—MS Columbia; substitute teacher; public and school librarian; audiovisual director in the Virgin Islands.

Ethel Blake [Sykes] '57 (Social Studies/Physical Education +)—work toward MA; retail sales; taught elementary and junior high science and language arts; school administration; union leader.

Gwendolyn Boyce '53 (Spanish/Accounting +)—MA Seton Hall, work toward doctorate; taught elementary, junior high Spanish; junior and senior high guidance counselor.

Patricia Brown [White] '56 (English/Geography +)—MA William Paterson; taught elementary; high school reading specialist.

Roberta Brown [Thaxton] '57 (Spanish/English +)—MA Montclair State; taught elementary; reading specialist; state alternate route teacher trainer; college adjunct (at Montclair State).

Thelma Clark [Spence] '53 (Social Studies/Geography +)—MA City College of New York; taught elementary in New Jersey, New York, and Maryland; reading specialist; worked with Title I program in junior and senior high.

E. Alma Flagg '43 (MA) for *J. Thomas Flagg* '40 (Science/Science)—*Alma*: BA Newark State, EdD Columbia; NYA positions; taught elementary in DC and New Jersey; taught junior high remedial reading; school and district administration; poetry book author. *Tom*: MA Montclair State, EdD Rutgers; military; taught junior high science and elementary; district administrator; college professor (at Montclair State).

**Marie Frazee [Baldassarre]* '43 (English/French)—MA Montclair State, EdD Columbia; taught elementary; secretary; college counselor and professor (at Montclair State).

**Irwin Gawley* '49 (Science/Science)—MA Montclair State, EdD Columbia; taught high school chemistry; college professor, department chair, dean, vice president (at Montclair State).

George Harriston '49 (Latin/English)—MA University of Minnesota; military; taught junior and senior high Latin; college adjunct.

Juanita High '51 (English/Social Studies +)—MA University of Pennsylvania, EdD Rutgers; taught in day care center, elementary, junior and senior high English; regional, state, and college educational administrator in New Jersey and Pennsylvania; private business.

Florence Holcombe [Hampton] '28 (Normal School)—BA and MA Newark State; office work in family business; taught elementary and special education; college adjunct.

Reuben Johnson '59 (Science/Science)—MA Montclair State; taught junior high science; Peace Corps director in Botswana, Africa; federal and college (at Montclair State) educational administrator; private business in Africa and USA; high school guidance counselor.

Bernice Mallory [Smith] '53 (Social Studies/Geography +)—MA California State/Los Angeles, JD St. John's; taught elementary and junior high reading and social studies in Ohio, California, and New York; semi-administrative school work; lawyer.

Vernell McCarroll [Oliver] '43 (Social Studies/Geography/English)—MA Howard, work toward doctorate; taught at four black colleges in DC, Maryland, Virginia, and Ohio; taught high school social studies in New York; guidance counselor; principal; upgrading independent school libraries.

**Morris McGee* '49 (English/Physical Education/Physics)—MA and EdD New York University; taught high school English; military; private business; fundraiser and college professor (at Montclair State).

Ethel Miller [Henderson] '48 (English/Spanish)—secretary; taught elementary and junior high English; office work in family business.

Lillian Pettigrew [Morson] '57 (Speech/English +)—taught high school English and proprietary post-secondary school language skills; elementary and junior high speech therapy; textbook author.

Matthew Pinkman '54 (Social Studies/English +)—MA Montclair State; taught elementary and junior high; principal.

Geraldine Riley [Doswell] '53 (Mathematics/Accounting +)—MA Columbia; taught junior and senior high mathematics and elementary; guidance counselor.

Norma Thompson [Richardson-Dade] '33 (Latin/English)—MA Columbia; retail sales; taught junior and senior high English in Alabama and DC; worked in government office; novel author.

Frances Thornhill [Morris] '52 (College High School)—BS and MBA Montclair State; financial analyst and tax office supervisor.

**Audrey Vincentz [Leef]* '43 (Mathematics/Physical Science)—MA Stevens, EdD Rutgers, MDiv Drew; taught high school mathematics; private business; department chair; college professor and campus chaplain (at Montclair State).

Howard White '56 (Social Studies/Physical Education +)—MA Montclair State, PhD University of Washington/Seattle; taught junior high social studies and science; audiovisual coordinator; school, district, county, and state educational administrator in New Jersey, Washington, and Maryland; private consultant.

The following sections of this chapter will summarize the findings according to the eight categories of questions. An analysis of the findings as a whole—related to the major concepts of racism, status attainment, community, integration (academic and social), and persistence/retention—follows in Chapter VI, "Discussion."

Pre-entry Attributes

The interview questions in this section addressed family background, parental employment and education, the student's preparation for college, high school experiences, and encouragement toward college. The amount of detail garnered from subjects varied according to their willingness and ability to share their personal and family histories.

Family Background

Both parents	Father (Mother Dead)	Mother (Father Dead)	Mother (Divorce)	Only Child
25 (3 white)	1 (white)	1 (black)	1 (black)	7 (1 white)

Most of the 28 subjects of this study were raised in seemingly stable families with both parents (or, in some cases, a stepparent) present. Only three lived with a single parent—in two instances due to death (one black, one white) and in one instance divorce (black). Seven subjects (one white) had no siblings, although one of these shared his home with seven foster sisters. Obviously, the presence of parents and siblings does not in itself constitute stability or foster a climate conducive to intellectual growth. There was great variety in the home and community environments, which are summarized below in chronological order according to the interviewee's year of graduation.

The oldest subject, Florence '28, was the youngest of 10 children who came “from a family of educators, all kinds of teachers, people who are interested in other people and doing for them.” One of her sisters had graduated from the Montclair State Normal School in 1918,⁶² and both parents were greatly involved with their children's education and well-being (sometimes to the irritation and dismay of those children, who thought the house rules were too rigid). Florence could talk nonstop about the closeness and love within her large family.

Norma '33, the very fair-skinned child of a racially mixed mother and a white father, was adopted as an infant by an African American couple who had come to New Jersey from Virginia. Her adoptive father was dark and her mother light. Like Florence,

⁶² Florence's sister was one of four black women in the normal school class of 1918. She said, “When those girls first came out, it was a novelty. There weren't too many black girls coming out from the normal schools.”

she spoke with deep reverence and love of the warmth within her family which, unlike Florence's, was small: "We had a wonderful home life." But she also recounted the grave insults endured by the three family members due to their racial status. Her best friend was an Italian girl who suffered her own hurts through association with Norma. "Everybody looked askance at her. What do you want to fool with a Negro girl for?" When Norma's mother was injured, she and her father took her to the local hospital, where "Afro-American doctors couldn't serve on the staff and it was all segregated." A nurse attempted to prevent her father from entering with his wife and daughter, assuming he was a stranger because of his dark color. Norma struggled with identity issues for many years.

Katherine '34 came from a well-to-do home. She was a childhood friend of Norma, despite the difference in their parents' educational and economic status. She had one sister who "did not want to be a teacher! Anything but a teacher!" Both sisters eventually were employed by the Newark Board of Education in their respective positions as teacher and school social worker.

Tom '40 lived in Georgia with his parents and older sister, who died at a young age. After his mother also died when Tom was 10 years old, his father remarried and the family relocated to Newark. Tom's wife, Alma '43 (MA), lost her father when she was 13 years old. Her widowed mother, a highly intelligent woman, constantly encouraged her five children to learn, although only Alma and her sister completed high school.

Vernell '43 lived with her parents, four siblings, and various members of the extended family who occupied an apartment in their home.

Our house was like the underground railroad, because everybody who came North came to our house . . . primarily from Georgia, which was my mother's home. . . . They had all of those marvelous skills [such as millinery and plastering] that white people no longer had.

Two white female graduates of the class of 1943 were interviewed as well.

Audrey '43 (white) came from a two-parent family with two older brothers. In 1888, her great-uncle was the youngest graduate of Stevens Institute, a New Jersey engineering college, and her great-grandmother headed a school for the teaching of English to foreigners. Marie '43 (white) was the only child in an otherwise adult household that included an aunt in addition to her parents. At the time of the interview, she was the last living member of her family.

Thelma A '44 grew up in Virginia with her parents and little brother. Her father died when she was quite young and her mother remarried "a wonderful man." When Thelma A was in the seventh grade, the family moved to New Jersey. "We were poor, dollar-wise," but the home was rich in love. Her brother graduated from MSTC in 1952.

The parents of Marilyn '46 had several children, but she was the only one who survived infancy. Her father himself died when she was four years old. Until she reached third or fourth grade, she lived with her grandparents in Philadelphia while her mother was employed in Newark. Marilyn "took refuge in books" and "made friends with the librarian." Later in life, she was fascinated to learn of her father's family heritage in Virginia, including an ancestor who had served as a seaman following the Revolutionary War. "It gave me roots."

Both parents of Ethel M '48 were from Jamaica where they were educated in the British style. Her father's English "was perfect and he would not tolerate us in the house to speak anything but absolutely perfect English." Ethel M and her four brothers all went to college.

George '49 lived with a sister, brother, and both parents. His mother apparently spent most of her time in home-related work, while his father was the one who

participated in school events such as parents' night. Although "at times he was very supportive," George's father was inconsistent in dealing with his son.

Two white male subjects from the class of 1949 also participated in the study. The mother of Irv '49 (white) had died, leaving him with his father and paternal grandparents in a two-family home where the other occupant was a high school teacher. The mother of Moe '49 (white) and his four siblings also died when he was young, but his father remarried a woman who was a teacher.

Juanita '51 was an only child who lived with her mother and stepfather, and her natural father played a role in her life as well. She spent part of each summer with her father's family in Virginia and was greatly, though subtly, influenced by the impressive educational levels attained by numerous relatives.

Frances '52 (College High School) was the only child in a well-to-do family. She had begun her education in New York City at the private Modern School run by the daughter of James Weldon Johnson. When the family moved to Montclair as Frances entered third grade, she was academically advanced but socially isolated despite the presence of six or seven other black pupils in the classroom. Frances sought solace in books and listened to her parents talking about the NAACP, of which her father was a member. Due to her father's profession and her parents' West Indian (British) background, Frances "grew up with a very different lifestyle than many of . . . the blacks at that time."

Four of the six black graduates from the class of 1953 participated in the study. The parents of Gwen '53 were raised in Barbados and received British educations. She lived with them and her brother in a small town in northern New Jersey. Following her parents' divorce, Thelma C '53 lived with her mother, sister, and grandparents in another small northern New Jersey town that was home to only four or five other black families.

Bernice '53 was the middle of three children in a musical household. Her mother was excessively nervous about her physical well-being as Bernice energetically pursued activities that involved running, climbing, and falling. "She wanted me to be a lady! I was lost!" But her father defended and encouraged her spirited behavior. Gerry '53 lived with her parents and one sister. Her earliest formal education was in a racially mixed school. When the district lines were redrawn, she and all other African American pupils were transferred to an all-black school equidistant from her home.

Matthew '54 was an only child, but his parents cared for seven foster children who were like sisters to him. They lived in a semi-rural area where Matthew was the only black student in his class until the last two years of high school.

Three of the six African Americans in the class of 1956 were subjects in the study. Like others, Joyce '56 and her family—parents, two brothers, and three sisters—lived in an integrated neighborhood: "There were two black families on my street . . . there was no ghetto to speak of . . . so I was a product of integration right from the very beginning." Her parents were extremely attentive to all their children, leading them to feel important and worthwhile. But Joyce developed physically at a young age and, to avoid the teasing, gained weight to mask her "problem." The weight itself became a problem that plagued her throughout all her school years and beyond. Joyce perfected a pattern of coping by covering up.

Patricia '56 came from a home in which her father's alcoholism took a toll on the family, especially his wife. "That's why I liked making my mother happy. When she found out that my brother and I had a lot of ability, she was very happy." Her grandmother also was a part of the household. In their small country town in north Jersey (where Gwen '53 also lived), African Americans who attended the local movie theatre

were forced to sit in the balcony. Howard '56, the oldest of four brothers, lived with his parents in a fairly large and racially mixed city.

Ethel B '57 was “pampered and babied” by her family, which consisted of five siblings, her mother, and her stepfather. “I didn’t know it was a ghetto; it was a place where I lived.” She was the only young woman in her neighborhood to attend college, “so everybody protected me on my block and they wanted to know how I was doing in school . . . because I was their pride and joy. So I had to finish.”

Roberta '57 was an only child in a very close-knit family with a mixed racial background. She learned early to use her imagination in creating playmates and was ecstatic when her father took a position as an apartment superintendent. “I had 24 families!”

Lillian '57 was only 13 when her father died in a work-related accident, leaving her mother with three children of whom Lillian was the youngest. Her father had migrated from Georgia and had a deep love for books. Her mother, the product of a mixed marriage, had experienced racial abuse that included a cross-burning. “She became very tough from that. She never said, ‘Don’t do this’ and she never said, ‘You can’t do this.’ She would just say, ‘Be careful.’” Lillian’s brother graduated from Montclair State Teachers College in 1954.

Reuben '59 lived with his parents and three siblings. His mother was an assertive woman who gave this advice when he decided to attend college: “Don’t you go up there messing with those white people!” He interpreted her admonition as motherly protection “against racism that she might have thought was out there.”

Jeannette '59 grew up in a big family as the youngest of seven children. She valued the stability of her family life, remarking that she had had only two addresses during her entire lifetime in comparison with children of the 1990s who might have “10

different addresses within two or three years.” Her father had an extraordinary work ethic: “The first time I ever saw him stay home was because his father had died.” Her aunt, a beautician, had attended a southern college and was greatly interested in advancing the education of her relatives and customers. “It was almost a question to get your hair done: ‘What are you doing in school? What are you studying?’” Jeannette was very active in the NAACP youth group. “That’s why I know my black history so well and I know how they do things politically.”

Parental Employment

Father	Mother
physician – 2	homemaker – 6 (1 white)
teacher – 1	teacher – 5 (1 white)
small business owner – 6 (1 white)	nurse – 4
electrician – 2 (white)	small business co-owner – 2
dam engineer – 1 (white)	school disciplinarian – 1
journalist for black newspaper – 1	realtor – 1 (white)
minister – 1	clerical/stenographer – 3
piano restorer – 1	seamstress – 3
apartment superintendent – 1	domestic – 6
railroad worker – 3	cook – 1
chauffeur – 3	factory worker – 1
laborer – 3	“Rosie the Riveter” – 2
custodian – 2	
mechanic – 2	
farmer – 1	
mailman – 1	
messenger – 1	
gardener – 1	
construction worker – 1	

Because some of the subjects’ parents had held more than one position, the total number of occupations listed above equals more than 28 for both fathers and mothers. The majority of paternal positions were low status, with the most notable exceptions being the two African American medical doctors who provided their daughters with

privileged backgrounds. The wife of one physician was a nurse and the wife of the other was a teacher. Of the remaining mothers who were employed, approximately half were in low status work.

Audrey (white) commented that “when other mothers were in the kitchen, my mother was in real estate!” That may have been unusual in her community, although in this small sample of teachers college students, half of the four white mothers were employed; of the remaining two, one was a homemaker and the other was deceased. But the great majority of black mothers in this study held jobs outside the home. Some were in *other* people’s kitchens, to be sure, but they were in paid positions.

Lillian’s mother was widowed at age 34 with three teenage children. She “managed by holding two jobs, doing house cleaning and office cleaning.” Bernice was somewhat dismissive of both parents’ work: “My father worked various jobs. . . . My mother did whatever. It was always domestic work.” Vernell’s mother helped her husband in various family businesses while the five children were young, returning to school for nurse training when they got older. Until that time, although her father was employed, Vernell couldn’t understand why her mother didn’t “work” like her friends’ mothers did. Her high school years occurred during the Depression, a time when “a lot of people were kind of subdued, seduced, into giving up.” She recalled that some people thought:

“What’s the point of going to college? I might as well go and get some money here.” And that is when people did make money, because I know my own family, you know, made money during the war. Talk about “Rosie the Riveter”—everybody made a little money during the war.

The mother of Ethel B likewise became a nurse later in life after doing war-related “Rosie the Riveter” work and domestic jobs.

Four of the subjects' mothers had been teachers in the South. Anderson (111-113) found that even in the early twentieth century, admission to some southern normal schools did not require a high school education. Jeannette's mother, without either a high school or normal school diploma, had been a teacher in Georgia when "standards were different." Norma's mother "was a very smart woman." After completing high school, she was employed as a country school teacher in Virginia without a normal school certificate. Thelma A's mother had graduated from the Christiansburg Normal and Industrial Institute in Virginia and taught. After her first husband died, she remarried and stopped working in order to keep house for her farmer husband who had only a few years of schooling. Katherine's mother graduated from the Morristown Normal School in Tennessee and taught there before assuming the secretarial work in her husband's medical office, which was in their home. Many of the women in her family were teachers as well, and her father had been a teacher and a principal before returning to college for a medical degree. The stepmother of Moe (white) was also a teacher—with a bachelor's degree from Columbia University.

Frances, the other doctor's daughter, mentioned that because of her father's standing as a physician, she "had advantages that [other children] didn't have." Nevertheless, both of those doctors had to endure the humiliation of being barred from caring for their patients at the local hospitals. Frances was born at home because her mother could not have been attended by a black doctor at the hospital.

If a patient had to go into the hospital, my dad and the other doctors would have to turn them over to a white physician. . . . Most of them would have come out of either Meharry or Howard, and I guess they considered that their medical training was not on a par with Columbia or any of the other medical schools around.

Among the other fathers, there were some interesting positions. Joyce's father, a railroad crane engineer and professional boxer, "was always studying for something" and

even took typing classes. Ethel M related that her father's longest-lasting position was as a custodian in the school she attended. "That didn't bother me . . . a lot of people mistook him for a teacher because he spoke absolutely flawlessly." Marilyn's father had been a writer for a black newspaper in Pennsylvania before he died when she was only four years old. And Norma's father worked as a bank messenger to support the family, as a minister late in life in response to a calling, and as a portrait painter because he was talented.

He was a gifted portrait painter. And he did a picture of Mary Church Terrell. . . . Terrell Junior High [in Washington, DC] now has that picture. . . . And he did a picture of Booker T. Washington [who] . . . gave him a sitting, and that was in 1905. The picture went on display in the Negro building at the Jamestown Exposition in 1905, and that picture now is at Tuskegee.

Parental Education

High School – Both	Father Only	Mother Only	Neither
12 (2 white)	5 (1 white)	4	7 (1 white)

College – Both	Father Only	Mother Only	Neither
0	5*	4*	19 (4 white)

*did not necessarily *graduate* from college

In the majority of families, at least one parent was a high school graduate and in nearly half the cases, both parents had graduated from high school. On the college level, in none of the families had both parents graduated from college. Of the fathers, only two were graduates and, in fact, had continued on to medical school and were practicing physicians; three others had attended college for a short time. Two mothers had graduated from normal school and one from nursing school; another mother had attended college for one year.

Nine subjects stated that family members other than parents had been to college and were employed in occupations such as physician, dentist, and teacher. It is likely that

additional subjects had college-educated relatives even though they did not mention this fact during the interview.

Preparation for College

Most of the subjects had no direct preparation for what to expect in college, as they were the first in their families and/or neighborhoods to attend.

Not many people in the neighborhood when I was growing up went to college. So you didn't have the kind of role models that some of our young people have today. . . . I really don't recall talking to anyone about what college would be like—anyone! (Reuben)

“On the street that I lived on, there wasn't anybody who went to college” (Lillian).

“There was nothing to tell me about college other than what I had seen in the movies”

(Bernice). “There was no college talk in our house. I took the college prep courses in high school because I was ‘bright’” (Gerry).

Four subjects used virtually identical language: “I had absolutely no idea!”

Some saw the teachers college as an extension of high school, and thus had been rather unconcerned about the transition. Thelma C exhibited great self-confidence in stating that although no one in her family had been to college, she felt well prepared for *anything* in life by virtue of a strong upbringing. “There were certain things that you did and you didn't do, no matter where you were!” She went off to college secure in her preparation for life, if not specifically for college. Bernice indicated that someone she knew from home was a student at MSTC, but had provided no special direction and, in fact, did not socialize much with her when they were both present on campus.

However, eight people mentioned that they had received guidance from parents, sister, brother, various other relatives, teachers, and a friend. For example, Lillian's brother, who was already a student at MSTC, served as a mentor “in the sense of the

mechanics of doing a thing” and in general was helpful in easing the way for her.

Patricia likewise benefited from the counsel of her older friend, Gwen, who was already a student at MSTC. Jeannette “had a very good orientation as to what college was going to be like” from her sister, a student at nearby Seton Hall. Gwen’s high school teacher took a group of students to the campus for a special event, and “that sold me, just like that.”

Howard took a proactive approach when he was in a position to assist his high school friends who had no understanding of college preparation. “I’d do the research and find out where the scholarships were, and how they could get there with marginal kinds of grades, and helped them write [the scholarship and college applications] and gave money.” He even provided suits for their interviews.

High School

The subjects had a mix of high school experiences, extending from very negative to the best years of their lives. The specific interview question about high school experiences asked for an assessment of the student’s talents and interests during that time, which probably skewed the responses toward the positive. Nevertheless, five subjects offered comments on the negative aspects of their experiences. Joyce admitted that shyness led her to smoke in high school so she wouldn’t have to talk to anybody.

George, Ethel M, Norma, and Ethel B described episodes of racism and classism.

Despite her shyness, Joyce considered herself to be popular. She was very active as a class officer and a member of numerous groups, although she was not asked on many personal dates. “I would say that belonging to things was a big substitute for a social life.” It will be seen that she followed the same pattern in college, joining and leading groups in lieu of intimate one-on-one relationships.

George recounted a high school discussion about race relations in which the teacher suggested that people needed only to be respectful of one another and work together, not to engage in social interaction.

And he looked at me and said, “For instance, you wouldn’t expect to be invited to my home for dinner, would you?” . . . I said to him, “I wouldn’t *want* to come to your house for dinner. Why would I want to come to your house for dinner?” That’s the only time in high school I ever remember. And of course, he was very embarrassed, and I think he immediately understood that he had done a stupid thing. I didn’t resent it. I didn’t go home and talk about it. I laughed about it afterwards with my classmates, and I said, “Can you imagine that?” And they were my white classmates and we all laughed about it. It was over.

Yet far from being “over” in his memory, it was vivid more than 50 years later even though, on the whole, high school did not seem to be especially troublesome for him. On the other hand, Norma, who had an exceedingly fair complexion, stated that she did not feel a sense of belonging.

I had so much unpleasantness in high school. . . . They’d get friendly and then when they would find out that I was not one of them, then all of a sudden it would all be over. . . . I felt ostracized, and then, of course, I ostracized myself. . . . I built up a little protection.

Norma was able to secure an after-school job at a major department store by passing for white during a time when the only black employees were the elevator boys. Although her white classmates were “stand-offish” in school, she expressed grudging gratitude to them for not exposing her racial identity to the store management. Instead, they winked when passing her station and kept quiet. She was “white on the job and black socially”—dating those same elevator boys, among others—and this dual lifestyle continued into college with its attendant confusion. In her 80s, Norma wrote a novel that has autobiographical elements. It describes the struggles of a fair-skinned young woman similar to herself, and the act of writing served to exorcise some of her race demons.

Ethel M, another fair-skinned student, did not enjoy high school as a teenager in Montclair. She had a West Indian background and, in addition to the absence of black

teachers, “I didn’t feel totally comfortable there because I felt some hostility from some black students.” There was friction between American and West Indian blacks and her friendships with white students, which she characterized as being good, ended at 3 PM. Worse than the racial tensions, she was acutely conscious of class and economic distinctions. “I remember kids in elementary pulling up to school in chauffeur-driven cars,” and in high school there were sororities and fraternities that emphasized economic status. However, impartiality reigned within the classrooms. “I loved high school academically . . . but socially it was not the greatest.”

Ethel B said that in her high school, “we didn’t intermingle too much with the whites except in the clubs. But for strictly social, my friends were Negroes.” She was dark-skinned and believed she was not selected for certain positions or honors in high school because of her race. She began to realize that when she was offered special posts such as hall monitor, it meant “there was something that they were supposed to have given me” and the school officials were assuaging their consciences by substituting a lesser honor. At the same time, she encountered the black-versus-black discrimination mentioned by Ethel M. She felt herself in competition with an African American girl who was “very, very fair, and whatever I went out to do, she went out to do. So she always got it and I didn’t, and that hurt a lot.” She protested to community officials and “that’s when they started choosing the darker” children.

On the positive side, several subjects reported feeling proud of their academic accomplishments in high school. Joyce was 12 in a class of 200, Lillian was 10 in a class of 108, Marilyn made it her business to stay in the top 25, Ethel B was in the top 10,

Norma was number 13 in a large class,⁶³ and Audrey (white) was the valedictorian. As examples of leadership roles attained by black students, Bernice was the class speaker at graduation, Matthew was class president for all four years (and the only black student for the first two of those years), Lillian was class president for two years, Reuben was class president for one year, and Joyce was class treasurer for three years. Many subjects related the varied club and sports activities in which they were full participants. Lillian stated, “I knew I was a leader.” Howard said he was “looked to as a leader within the school.” And Reuben developed a “pretty good self-image” by competing successfully in both the intellectual and social arenas against a diverse group of classmates.

The diversity cited by Reuben at his school in Newark—pupils who were Chinese, Jewish, Italian, black, white, mixed—was a bit more extensive than the black-white medley mentioned by the others. Most subjects apparently attended integrated high schools, although in some cases integration amounted to one or two black pupils in the entire school. (The question was not posed to every subject.) However, in predominantly white schools, the presence of black pupils was unusual in the top academic tracks. Marie (white) reported no African Americans at all in the top-tier classes at Montclair High School. George was the only black male in his college prep program in Roselle. Juanita was one of only two blacks in the classical curriculum at Atlantic City High School. Among high school faculty, the number of black teachers ranged from none to a few, even in districts such as Atlantic City where the elementary schools were segregated.

⁶³ Norma did not consider herself to be bright, but said she “had plugged” to attain good grades. Lillian similarly downplayed her intelligence: “I was not a bright student. I was a studier.”

Some people found a feeling of belonging through their same-race social groups. These included Roberta, whose relationships with her black high school sorority sisters endured to the time of the interview, and George, who had black and white school friends but “socially, it was pretty much I was with my black friends.” Others expressed complete comfort in mixed social groups.

Two subjects mentioned gender distinctions in their schools. Audrey (white) attended an all-female public junior high and Vernell praised her all-female public high school as a “really first-rate place.” They both appreciated their schools for the opportunity provided to girls to excel because they “were not competing with men.” It may be recalled that similar arguments were used by proponents of segregated schools for the benefits of educating black students apart from the competition or pressure from a white environment.

Three subjects arrived in northern schools from the South. Ethel B was seven years old when she came to New Jersey, having never been to school in Georgia and entering second grade with a burden of shyness born of unfamiliarity. She was fortunate to have an understanding and inspirational black teacher who helped her to blossom. Thelma A was in Virginia until the seventh grade, and felt separated from her northern classmates—even African Americans—due to her southern speech patterns as well as other differences. “Others [black pupils] may have fit in better because they were accustomed to being here all the time. They were born here in New Jersey, so they fit in.” And Tom moved to New Jersey from Georgia at age 10; his wife, Alma, noted that he had had black teachers in the South, but not in Newark. Tom developed the kind of personality that put others at ease and made him popular with friends of both races.

Despite incidents of racism and other problems, Katherine said she “enjoyed high school,” Ethel B had a “good time,” Thelma C mused that “they must have been good

years, because I enjoyed them,” and Jeannette enthused that “high school was wonderful.” Audrey (white) also remembered high school in very positive terms.

Encouragement to Go to College

Although many family members were not in a position to provide specific guidance because college was in no way a part of their experience, others saw education as the right and even the responsibility of their talented children despite (or perhaps because of) their own lack of opportunity. Gwen reported that when she was in first grade, her father would drive her past the high school on a regular basis. He informed her that she would be going there after finishing elementary school, “and you get more education and you learn more. And after you graduate from high school, then you go to college.” Gwen’s parents were brought up in Barbados and, while both were very bright, neither had the personal funds required to attend high school in that country. Her mother became a seamstress apprentice but her father won a scholarship to high school, and he was determined that Gwen have a full education through college.

A number of other subjects also credited their parents with encouraging them toward college. Ethel M, whose parents both had received a secondary education in Jamaica, said that her “father used to preach about education and he just expected it was something that we were going to do.” All four of her siblings also completed college. Juanita “never saw any other choice” than to go to college; her mother, with a secondary education, believed that since Juanita was a good student, she must go. Reuben’s father had left school after sixth grade. He took the child Reuben to work with him and said, “I don’t want you to do this.” (Reuben also was motivated by the sight of someone going down the street near his house wearing a varsity sweater. “I sort of thought that I wanted one of those sweaters!”)

One participant, Howard, declared that he had encouraged himself to attend college, because “that’s the way you got a good job.” In other cases, teachers, advisors, and sports coaches were the motivating factors in a student’s decision to apply for college. Alma indicated that in her husband Tom’s case, “somebody was really interested in him and encouraged him to persist not only in running, but to go to college.” Likewise, she had one special high school teacher: “She was interested in me.” Other people recounted similar encouragement on the part of school personnel.

Some subjects asserted that they had needed no encouragement because it was taken for granted they would go. Thelma A did not recall being encouraged by anyone to attend college. “I just think it was a known fact that I was going. I signed up for college prep.” There was an expectation within her family that she would go to college “because I seemed like a bright type of child and paid attention, so they pushed me.” Gerry, on the other hand, had no such prospect instilled by her family, where “there was no college talk in our house.” Nevertheless, on her own she took the college prep courses and her high school mathematics teacher then encouraged her in the choice of a particular college. Lillian’s mother was “always self-conscious because she didn’t have an education. . . . We just knew we were going.” Neither of Jeannette’s parents had graduated from high school, but “it was understood that’s where we would go.” Moe (white) said: “I don’t think anybody encouraged me. I just assumed I was going to go.”

Vernell mused that “encouragement” was not the best word. “It was just expected. ‘I didn’t get it; you’re going to get it.’ You had no choice.” And then she reflected on behalf of African Americans as a whole during the 1920s and 1930s:

This was their solution, whether they were DuBois people or whether they were Booker T. Washington. All of those stories were part of your life. . . . If you were [part of the] talented tenth, you’d damn well better be someone. That was a very special kind of generation.

Ethel B described an incident of nonencouragement regarding her desire to apply to MSTC. “I was told by my guidance counselor this was one of the best schools in the nation, so I would not be accepted.” And Bernice received mixed messages from her parents, neither of whom had gone past seventh grade. Her father would tell his offspring, “You’re going to school. . . . When you get out of high—when you get out of college—” When her mother objected that he was planting unrealistic expectations in the children’s minds that could not be backed up financially, he advised them not to listen to their mother. “And that’s why I’m where I am, because I didn’t listen to my mother!” Her sister believed their mother and did not go to college. Her brother, like Bernice, listened to their father and became a college mathematics professor.

Goals and Commitments (I)

The questions in this section involved motivation for teaching, career expectations, who provided the inspiration to become a teacher, application (if any) to other colleges, why the decision was made to attend Montclair, tuition rate, how the education was financed, and the student’s outside commitments to a job, family responsibilities, etc.

Motivation for Teaching

The following seven major motivations for teaching were described by the interviewees—something they always wanted to do; emulate an admired teacher; do better for the next generation; be a role model for children of both races; suggested by a respected adult; limited finances; best of very few options.

Several subjects knew from an early age that they wanted to teach. Typical comments included the following: “From the time I was six years old, I knew that I was

going to be a teacher” (Katherine ’34). “From the time I was a little girl I was teaching my books and my dolls and my friends. . . . I liked school and I liked the teachers” (Gwen ’53). Teaching was “what I always wanted to do and I never considered doing anything else” (Alma ’43 – MA). “I wanted to be a teacher” (Florence ’28). “I never had any other desire in life but to teach” (Audrey ’43 – white). “I never remember wanting to be anything else. . . . If the teacher taught it, I’d come home and my dolls would be lined up and they’d get the same lesson!” (Lillian ’57). “I used to play being a teacher as a child. . . . I like working with people and the thinking that goes with it and whatnot. I always wanted to be a teacher as a child” (Roberta ’57).

Others had memorable school experiences or beloved teachers, and made conscious decisions to emulate them. “I was veering towards teaching because I had had such a happy experience as a student in high school” (Marie ’43 – white). “I really enjoyed English in junior high and high school” (Ethel M ’48). “[My interest was] generated by a high school chemistry teacher” (Irv ’49 – white). George ’49 initially wanted to be a doctor because his father was employed as a chauffeur for a wealthy physician who “would talk about his operations and so forth. And so I said I wanted to be a doctor. I was a small boy.” Not until he was in junior college did he realize that science was not his calling. However, he said, “I had an absolutely wonderful English teacher and Latin teacher in high school and I had a wonderful woman in English comp in junior college. And I suddenly said, ‘This is what I want to do!’ I never regretted it, except for the money.” Matthew ’54 had wanted to be a dentist, but:

When I was a junior in high school, we had a third grade teacher who used to have to leave early in order to take courses . . . and I took over her class in the afternoon. I fell in love with teaching, right then and there. And after that there was never any question as to what I would do in my life.

Ethel B ’57 remembered a teacher who

brought me out of my shyness and she made me realize that I was intelligent. . . . Everything I wanted to do was to shine before Mrs. Anthony. I said, “Oh, this is great. Maybe I would like some boys and girls to see me as a person that they would like—” Well, now I know the word is “emulate.” I didn’t know it in second grade. . . . From the second grade on, all I could think about was becoming a teacher.

The motivation for Vernell ’43 was just the opposite of that cited above. She “thought that much of [history] had been poorly taught,” and wanted to do better for the next generation. Only two people, Gwen ’53 and Reuben ’59, mentioned that adults specifically took the initiative to encourage them toward a teaching career. A woman who worked in the high school attendance office told Gwen, “Well, you’d be a good teacher.” Reuben “decided to become a teacher on the suggestion of a high school guidance counselor. . . . And I never had a beef with teachers, so I said, ‘That’s a great idea.’”

Some of the respondents had arrived at teaching by default. “At the time I thought I had no other options,” said Gerry ’53. She added, “I would suggest that students explore all options. I was not as informed as I should have been.”⁶⁴ Jeannette ’59 had thought about becoming a lawyer, but her father said, “A lawyer! Do something women do, like teach.” Norma ’33 wanted to go to Howard or Pratt for designing, but her parents would not allow her to leave home. “And so I talked with the counselor at the high school and she told me that they were giving an entrance exam up here on the campus. . . . I was accepted and once I got into it, I loved it.”

⁶⁴ Jessie Scott, a graduate from 1936, wanted to be a doctor. Like Gerry, she enrolled at MSTC because, according to her daughter, she did not see other options as a black woman at that time. Unlike Gerry, she never taught. She married a dentist and later became an optician (telephone conversation on 10/20/97). Teaching was not the first choice for every white student, either. Grace Flitcroft Quinn ’22 did not want to teach, but her father thought it would be a good career in case her future husband was unable to support her for any reason (telephone conversation on 12/16/97).

Others had thought out their options and concluded on their own that teaching was the best of a narrow set of career possibilities for women—particularly for black women. According to Katherine '34, “in the '30s, there were only a few professions and occupations that women would go into. . . . You could be a librarian, nurse, social worker and a teacher.” Vernell '43 said, “Other than teaching and nursing . . . what was there to do? . . . I didn't want nursing.” Gwen '53 saw her alternatives as “a secretary or a nurse or a teacher” and Lillian '57 stated that “women typically were the nurses or they were the teachers and so on.” Other women agreed.

There were only three things you could do—teach, be a secretary or a nurse. . . . I was a nurse's aide—and I knew I didn't want to be a nurse. I couldn't type, so I didn't want to be a secretary. So I thought teaching is the place to go. (Joyce '56)

I knew I didn't want a clerical job . . . and I was not going to do housework, God forbid, you know! That was all that was open to most of us [black women] in those days . . . a civil service job or you did housework . . . or you taught school.⁶⁵ (Marilyn '46)

At that time it was very limited as to what your career might be. It was either going to be a teacher or maybe a nurse or a secretary, and I didn't like either of those two, so teaching was the option that I chose. There was not much available for any woman at that time. And especially for women of color. (Thelma A '44)

Thelma A added that her true heart's desire was to be an actress. “And I think that's why I chose teaching—because you have a stage every day!” Bernice '53 echoed Thelma A: “I'm clearly a misplaced actress or something. When you teach, you're on stage and you've got these adoring students.”

Patricia '56 had reasoned out her career choice on a philosophical level. “Just being black would be an asset to many children, and letting them see blacks in positions

⁶⁵ As will be seen in the next section, Marilyn was not motivated to teach. Not knowing what job she could find, but wanting a college education, she went to the teachers college because it was nearby and inexpensive, and teaching was a career she could tolerate if she had to.

other than menial tasks. I thought it would be good for children. I think it worked in a very positive way.” Her classmate Howard ’56 also seemed to have come to a calculated conclusion: “I made my decision in about eighth grade that I wanted to be a physical education teacher and coach.”⁶⁶ Gwen ’53 had wanted to work as a Spanish-English secretary. After accompanying a friend to her job in New York City to see what it would be like, she determined: “I’m not riding this subway every day, fighting all these people. No way!” She decided to become a teacher of Spanish instead.

Finally, finances were the deciding factor for some students. “The teachers college was available to me and it was cheap enough for me to be able to make it” (Marilyn ’46).

We were poor and I looked at the schools and it just seemed to me that my parents weren’t going to be able to sponsor me through, you know, three years or four years of school and two years of law school. So I said, well, the teachers colleges aren’t as expensive, so maybe I ought to do that. (Bernice ’53)

Career Expectations

Most subjects did expect or at least hope to find teaching positions within the state, but others supposed they would have to “go South.” A few thought teaching might be a stepping stone to another career. Brint and Karabel (211, 260) pointed out that beliefs about available job opportunities are both objective (given the current labor market) and subjective (in accordance with “structurally rooted cultural conditioning”).

Katherine ’34 said, “My plan was to enter college, prepare to teach and teach in New Jersey.” Alma ’43 (MA) “really had not analyzed it or anything, although I’m sure I

⁶⁶ Later he revealed that he had plan A and plan B. The other plan was to become a science teacher and then go to medical school. Football interfered with his studies to the point that the rigors of the science program were replaced by a switch to social studies as a major.

was thinking that I wanted to teach where I was.” Audrey ’43 (white) observed that “north Jersey is a very provincial area, and none of us really ever thought of leaving northern New Jersey. And so I just thought I would teach locally somewhere.” Ethel M ’48 “thought I would be in New Jersey because my family is here.”

Bernice ’53 stated, “I really expected to teach in New Jersey . . . but it was very difficult for blacks to get jobs at that time.” Matthew ’54 said, “I knew I would get a teaching job at Hackettstown,” which was his hometown. He added that “it was just at the right time. . . . They were looking for a chance at that point to integrate and it worked out well for me.” Patricia ’56 professed that “it never occurred to me that I wouldn’t” find a teaching position in northern New Jersey. She reflected, “The young man I was going with told me I would never finish and become a teacher. I said, oh yes, I would. And I firmly believed that in my heart, that I would finish and go on to teach.” Lillian ’57 believed “I’d work in the systems that I knew about. . . . My roommate was going to Hawaii and others were going other places, but I didn’t want to leave” New Jersey. Likewise, her classmate Ethel B ’57 said, “I always expected to be a teacher in New Jersey.”

But some respondents had doubts about finding teaching jobs in northern New Jersey or even in the southern part of the state. Florence ’28 knew—and was convinced the normal school administration also knew—that she and other black students could not easily get jobs in the state. Vernell ’43 said there were no black teachers in her northern New Jersey hometown of Elizabeth. “There was one woman who did not look black and taught in the system, whom we all knew. But there were no *black* teachers.” Vernell did not count on getting a teaching job near home and mused that black women in her generation did not necessarily plan their careers. “Ours was a kind of shifting, happenstance period. Something happens here, you move here.” When Thelma A ’44

could not find a practice teaching location near home, she understood that she was not “going to get anything in New Jersey and nothing did open up for me.”⁶⁷ Howard ’56 explained that “there were only certain systems that were open and . . . only half the door was open. I knew that I was going to have a job getting a job, but I approached it optimistically.” Like Matthew, he ultimately found himself “in the right place at the right time” and was the first black male hired in Orange, another northern New Jersey city. The only expectation expressed by Jeannette ’59 was that she would not teach in her hometown of Jersey City due to her preference to live apart from her work environment.

Other respondents regarded a teaching certificate as a ticket to a temporary career or another type of employment. For example, Marilyn ’46 did not plan to become a teacher; she planned only to go to college:

If you go to college, you can get a job, a fairly decent job that will pay you a fairly decent salary, and that’s all I was thinking. . . . It was my number one focus and ambition and motivation—to finish and get a job. And if I had to teach, okay, I would teach, but I didn’t really want to teach, and I was lucky to be able not to have to.

Joyce ’56 had hoped eventually to become a college professor or a lawyer. (In fact, she did become an attorney much later in life.) Bernice ’53, on the other hand, also wanted to be a lawyer and had taken Latin in high school because “they said lawyers had to know Latin.” But, having accepted her father’s advice and enrolled in a teachers college, she determined: “When I decide to do something, I throw myself in it, so I’m going to teach!” Thelma C ’53 yearned for “the grand adventure,” which would be to travel and work in international business. Even after graduating from a teachers college and throughout her teaching career, she retained a desire for that grand adventure.

⁶⁷ However, with regard to the practice teaching placement, she later maintained: “I don’t think it had any racial intonations.”

Inspiration to Teach and Role Models

Subjects were asked to talk about people who had inspired them to become a teacher. Some did not answer the question directly, and others mentioned more than one person. Among the responses, high school and elementary teachers were cited most frequently (15), followed by various family members (10), counselors (2), coaches (2), and others (2). One participant declared that no one had inspired her. "I became a teacher by default" (Gerry '53).

Those who credited teachers offered comments such as the following. "I had a Spanish teacher in high school and a biology teacher who were two of the best teachers anybody ever had, and I said, 'I would like to be just like them.' And they were actually my role models" (Gwen '53).⁶⁸ "There were certain teachers that I admired very much. I don't know whether they were outstanding teachers or whether I just liked them, and they were well dressed and things of that sort, you know, and that impressed me" (Thelma A '44). "They were good teachers, so they were role models in that sense" (George '49). When I asked if they also encouraged him to become a teacher himself, he responded: "It's interesting we never talked about it." "I was inspired by several teachers. . . . We had unusually good teachers in [the town of] Montclair at the time" (Ethel M '48). "I had a good time with teachers. . . . So, it wasn't too far-fetched to say, 'Well, why not teach?'" (Reuben '59). Vernell '43 said:

Having had some good teachers, I think the teachers were probably the best role models. . . . All along the line, there was a teacher who said, "You can do it! A! Good! Do this!" So there was always that encouragement. There were two or

⁶⁸ Gwen's Spanish teacher influenced her not only to follow in her professional footsteps, but also specifically to attend MSTC and to study abroad in Mexico. "I just wanted to go because Miss Bogdziewicz went."

three people who stood out. . . . Maybe because these people had to teach during the Depression and wanted to teach, they were an exceptional group.

And in the words of Bernice '53:

I had a sixth grade teacher. . . . She was so wonderful and I used to think, hmm, I'd like to do that. . . . One other teacher in elementary school . . . was inspirational to me. She helped me with reading. . . . The teachers in Atlantic City High School . . . tolerated us, but . . . I can't think of any closeness.

"I thought [my first teacher] was the greatest! . . . [I thought,] 'Maybe I could do this; this is really something great!'" (Ethel B '57). "They always felt that I had ability, and they would praise me. . . . [My kindergarten teacher] praised me a great deal, and that sort of made me admire the teaching profession" (Patricia '56). "I had a math teacher . . . that I thought was the best—really an excellent teacher" (Jeannette '59).

Family members also played a major inspirational role in the lives of many participants. "[My grandmother] was always dragging [my cousin and me] to things, to give speeches, to recite something, whatever. We were always in the public eye, and that kind of encouragement made us feel ready to do something all the time" (Joyce '56). "My dad thought it would be a good idea, because he was big on education" (Gwen '53). "[My godmother] became a teacher . . . and I was impressed with her as a person. . . . [My cousin] was also a teacher, who went to Oberlin long ago" (Ethel M '48). "My mother, of course. My aunts, my family" (Juanita '51). "My mother and my father . . . were the first ones to pique the interest in learning" (Reuben '59). "My brother . . . became a teacher in the same process that I did, and I could see his success and he was my mentor in so many ways" (Lillian '57). "My father was really my greatest role model. . . . [He] taught me from the beginning of my life that I could do anything I wanted to do. I was the first in my whole family to complete college" (Matthew '54). "The opportunities were not there for [my mother's] education beyond high school, and she kind of focused on me. . . . She encouraged me always to do my best" (Roberta '57).

“My mother was really my basic inspiration” (Patricia ’56). “I had an aunt . . . [who] was very much education minded” (Jeannette ’59).

Counselors and coaches were named less frequently. Bernice ’53 said that the high school “counselors were working with me.” Her classmate Thelma C ’53 reported that a counselor “began to encourage me, or at least to question me: ‘Where are you going to college and how are you going to get there?’ And my family and I began to talk about it!” A track coach and a football coach inspired Tom ’40 and Howard ’56, respectively.

Patricia ’56 appreciated her Girl Scout leader’s encouragement and Jeannette ’59 stated that “Mary McLeod Bethune was always a model of mine.”

Application to Other Colleges and Why Montclair Was Selected

More than half of the respondents (15) indicated that they had applied to, attended, or considered applying to or attending other colleges. Among them, four were transfers to Montclair from other institutions. In addition to those colleges, 15 others had attracted people, including one historically black institution.

Marilyn ’46 transferred from Newark State Teachers College because she “didn’t want to do grade school work” and Newark at that time prepared only elementary school teachers. George ’49 had first attended Union Junior College and then decided to make teaching his career. Moe ’49 (white) had attended Newark College of Engineering before entering the military. Upon discharge, Moe had assumed he would enroll in Princeton or an equally prestigious university.⁶⁹ Instead, he encountered a former high school

⁶⁹ Like Moe, Howard wanted to go to Princeton. But unlike Moe, Howard could not assume he would be accepted. In his experience, Princeton was not admitting anyone “from Orange High School at that time.”

classmate waiting for a bus to Montclair where he was registering for summer classes.

Having no other plans for the day, Moe accompanied his friend to the school and was impressed. “I went in and saw the acting registrar . . . [and] the next day I started class!”

The final transfer student, Thelma C ’53, explained with laughter that she first went to Trenton State Teachers College “because it was further away from home!” But she felt intellectually stifled there and attributed her sense of being “closed in” to the institutional atmosphere of a college geared toward training elementary school teachers (although it had a secondary program as well). “It was almost intellectual control.” She also felt a regional discomfort in the southern area of the state. “Several of us seemed to be, you know, not particularly happy, and I can remember after that year that two other people from north Jersey left.”⁷⁰ Between semesters at Trenton, Thelma C had taken classes at New York University, but decided that she “didn’t want to be a number.” She had enjoyed the class of one “eccentric” Trenton professor who challenged her mind. “She was never satisfied, but sometimes that’s what you need.” Upon the advice of friends, she applied to Montclair and rediscovered the mental challenge that she craved. Interestingly, Thelma C received both secondary and elementary certification from Montclair and found herself teaching elementary school after all.

Among the 15 other colleges that participants had either applied to or considered applying to, the only historically black institution to draw their interest was Howard University. But the parents of Norma ’33 said, “You can’t go to Howard because we’re not going to let you leave home.”⁷¹ Jeannette ’59 was offered a scholarship by Howard,

⁷⁰ Juanita, who hailed from south Jersey, found the transition easier from South to North. “When I think about kids who leave to go miles and miles away where there’s an entirely different kind of culture—but it’s a similar kind of culture here [in Montclair] at least. . . . Had I gone to Spelman in Atlanta, you’d have to get adjusted to a whole other thing.”

⁷¹ Yet, as Norma said in another part of the interview, “I wanted to be independent.”

but her parents, like Norma's, "did not want me to go away." Alma '43 (MA) received a scholarship for tuition at Howard, but could not accept it because there was no way to cover her living expenses in Washington. Gwen '53 "applied to Howard and was accepted, but there was no money." Ethel B '57, who was stung by black-on-black discrimination in high school, decided not to go "because I thought I would not fit in with the social structure at Howard. . . . They said the lighter color you were and the richer you were, then the more that you had there, like the privileges and the opportunities."

Joyce '56 did not mention Howard specifically, but shared Ethel B's belief that "there was hair and there was color in black schools, for sure. There was that also at home to a certain extent. . . . We could discriminate among ourselves just as much as we were being discriminated against by white people." Neither did Frances '52 (CHS) want to go to a black college "because apparently the emphasis was very social—you know, the parties and the clothes and that kind of thing."

Curiously, the only subject who eventually did go to Howard was Vernell '43, who enrolled there for her master's degree following the "unsavory experience" of not being able to get a teaching job after graduation. She declared, "I never liked it. I had great professors, but I didn't like the ambiance of the place. I was very unhappy there, so I was glad to get free of Howard." Her professors included Ralph Bunche, E. Franklin Frazier, Rayford Logan, and Merze Tate. She described one of them as "brilliant," but "unacceptable as a human being."

The other institutions named were Barnard, Douglass, Hunter, Kent State, Mount Holyoke, Northwestern, Oberlin, Pratt, Princeton, Smith, Temple, University of California, University of Pennsylvania, and West Chester. Jeannette admitted with a smile that she wanted to go to the University of California because "Jackie Robinson went there." Ethel B was interviewed in New York by a professor from Northwestern for

a place in the freshman class entering in 1953. He “practically pleaded with me to come to Northwestern! So I said, ‘Well, he must be trying to put some color into this place!’”⁷²

In the end, the reasons these two students and the others selected Montclair State Teachers College fell into five main categories, with several interviewees citing more than one motive: finances (13), reputation/standards (12), recommendation of someone else (10), location (8), and secondary school training (6).

Many subjects were in college during and shortly after the Depression, and it was difficult or impossible to marshal the financial resources required for private or out-of-state schools. Typical comments included the following. “I could afford to go to Montclair, and even then I worked my way through.” “I applied to Barnard and was accepted, and I applied to Howard and was accepted, but there was no money.” “I did apply for Smith College and I was accepted there, but I couldn’t afford it, so I applied for Montclair State. . . . It was obvious that if I were to go to college, . . . it would have to be something that would not be expensive.” “I wanted to go to Hunter College in New York and live in New York with my sister, but the family couldn’t see it that way. They didn’t have money enough to send me to Hunter.” “I wanted to go to Douglass in New Brunswick. But we didn’t have the dollars, so that was the end of that.” “I wanted to get into the cheapest one I could get into, because we had no money and my mother was widowed.”

“I really didn’t seriously consider going anywhere else. . . . It was not a possibility at the time financially.” “If my family had been more sophisticated and the financial situation in the country hadn’t been [depressed], . . . I might have applied to

⁷² Ethel B’s face-to-face experience with the interviewer trying to *persuade* her to enroll at Northwestern contrasted perfectly with a later face-to-face experience as an interviewer tried to *dissuade* her from a teaching position. Both interviewers used the same reason: her race.

Holyoke or Smith or Vassar.” “The tuitions [at Temple and the University of Pennsylvania] to me seemed to be way out of the range of my family.” “Everything that I wanted to do was prohibited by cost. So, we decided that the best opportunity for me would be at one of the teachers colleges in the state.” “I think it was the fact that the finances, you know, negated my going” to Northwestern. “This was my only option, really. My family could not afford much of anything else. . . . My eggs were really in the one basket—coming here to Montclair State.” Another subject echoed her language: “It was the only place I applied to. . . . I put all my eggs in one basket.”

Katherine, one of the two doctors’ daughters in this study, said that “a family friend, Dr. W. E. B. DuBois, had spoken to the president of Mount Holyoke and it was understood that I would enter in the freshman class.” Then came the Depression. Her father’s patients had no money so that he in turn had none to cover her expenses at Holyoke. Interestingly, 23 years later the other doctor’s daughter, Frances, *did* attend Mount Holyoke after graduating from College High School.

The reputation and standards of Montclair State Teachers College were cited nearly as frequently as finances in making the decision to attend the school. Katherine said:

Montclair had very rigorous standards. . . . I had already taken the College Board examination. And so I found that [the state college entrance] examination was practically as difficult. . . . In my freshman class, almost every student there was either a valedictorian or a salutatorian.⁷³

Other participants offered comments such as the following: “Montclair, of course, was *the* teacher training institution at that time.” “I liked the name. It sounded like it was good. Montclair. It sounded like it was the best and I wanted the best.”

⁷³ Among the six known African American graduates of the 1930s, the decade of Katherine’s attendance, at least one—Jessie Scott ’36—was a valedictorian (telephone conversation with her daughter on 10/20/97).

“Back then, if you wanted to be a high school teacher, this was the place to come.” “We knew the reputation of Montclair for secondary training. . . . We knew it was outstanding and if you wanted to be trained to be a high school teacher, that’s where you went.” “The standards for high school teachers were higher than the standards for elementary teachers.” “I never applied to any other college except Montclair. . . . Montclair had the reputation for being the most prestigious of the state colleges at the time.” “I understand people who didn’t do well enough in [the entrance examination] went to Newark. . . . There was a very high standard at that time because there were a lot of people who wanted to get in here.” “It was very hard to get into Montclair State.” “My mother did some research and Montclair has always been—I assume it still is—one of the strongest. I know it was then. Their entry requirements were higher than the others.” “At that time, it was a very highly rated teachers college.” “I was satisfied with Montclair because it had the reputation of being the best education college in the area, plus at Montclair I could get a BA degree as opposed to a BS.” One student chose not to apply to Jersey City State Teachers College in her hometown because “Montclair had the better reputation.”

The recommendations and assistance of trusted others played a significant role in the decisions of several subjects to enroll at Montclair. In addition to the student mentioned earlier who decided on a whim to accompany his enthusiastic friend to Montclair one summer day, interviewees made the following comments on the influence of others. “I worked in the attendance office at school, and the lady who was in charge of the attendance office encouraged me to go to Montclair.” “My math teacher . . . used her influence to get me an interview at Montclair. I was accepted and given a scholarship even though all deadlines had passed.” “[My] high school biology teacher and English teacher [were] both MSC graduates.”

There was a girl in our church [Vernell McCarroll] who had gone to Montclair. She was the only black person I had known who had gone to Montclair. . . . She said she loved it and it was a wonderful school. So when I thought I wanted to be a teacher, I never thought of any other school.

The person who was interviewing me [at West Chester in Pennsylvania] challenged me why I wanted to go into teaching. . . . I didn't take too kindly to that. So, of course, I didn't get into West Chester and I had very good grades in high school. . . . [The] assistant principal said, . . . "Oh, don't worry, Juanita. We'll get you into Montclair State." So he did. And I went up and took the entrance exam, passed with flying colors, and went to Montclair!

A high school counselor who had urged Reuben to apply for a scholarship from a black fraternity "didn't suggest Cal Tech or MIT. . . . She went to Montclair State, so she suggested that. But again, I don't have a problem with that, because I think I got a good, sound, scientific education at Montclair." Other subjects made comments such as the following: "I had heard of Montclair from friends." "I talked with the counselor at the high school, and she told me that they were giving an entrance exam up here on the campus. . . . [I applied] only to Montclair." "My friend Gwen Boyce . . . had gone to Montclair. And I always admired Gwen very much."

An important factor noted by a number of students was the college's location. "I had to be far enough away from home to be able to live on campus." "My mother wanted me to go to school in New Jersey." "That little corner of the state [where Paterson State Teachers College was located, in the Northeast] never attracted us." "It was easy to commute." (However, this student, Matthew, drove 117 miles round trip or spent three hours each day on the bus and train!) "My mother and father said, . . . 'We're not going to let you leave home.'" "The distance was comfortable." "I had to go somewhere where I could live at home and work. . . . I was working full-time. . . . It was a short drive." "My parents did not want me to go away."

The final main reason for selecting Montclair was its curriculum for training secondary as opposed to elementary school teachers. "I didn't want [to teach] little

children. . . . It's a lot of work in elementary, a lot of work." "I started out at Newark. . . . I didn't want to do grade school work. . . . I wanted to have a major . . . that's why I transferred to Montclair." "I wanted to teach in high school. There were two places. You could go to Trenton, which I couldn't commute to, or you could go to Montclair." "We looked at Glassboro and we looked at Montclair. . . . Secondary appealed to me more than elementary."

Two participants provided miscellaneous reasons for deciding to enroll at Montclair. Joyce initially wanted to attend Douglass. It was raining on the day she visited "and there was mud everywhere, so when I went to Montclair, it was a beautiful, sunshiny day and I picked Montclair." Gerry, who had not planned to pursue a teaching career or to attend any college at all, was urged and helped by a teacher at the last moment and "went to Montclair because it was there."

Vernell mentioned race as a significant factor in her decision to apply to Montclair for the class entering 1939. In her view: "All of the schools in New Jersey were prejudiced. I mean, Princeton was then called 'The Harvard of the South' and had no black kids. What else was there? Rutgers was not considered terribly first-rate until it developed . . .

Douglass." As will be seen, she was not alone in suspecting that racial considerations kept African American students out of the state teachers colleges as well. Therefore, "it was with great fear and trepidation that we applied" to Montclair. "Before the war, there were very few high school black teachers in the state of New Jersey that we knew of. . . . There were two others who applied with me and they did not get in (although they were certainly as capable as I was)."

Alma, who was enrolled in an emergency junior college during the Depression years,⁷⁴ applied to Montclair as a transfer student in 1936.

I was told that, regretfully, I could not be admitted. . . . Black students on campus were very rare and I was not an athlete or anything else outstanding that anyone would be dying to admit and to have as a part of the institution. . . . I was told by people who knew the college better that prejudice, bias, probably entered into it.

Ironically, her future husband—an outstanding Olympic-caliber athlete—was entering that very year as one of two black freshmen at Montclair. And Roberta, who entered Montclair in 1952, observed:

Most of the students I knew went to teachers colleges or black colleges. . . . Many families sent their girls to college to find husbands and so black families with means would have wanted a black college since mixing was intolerable all around. There was an era when college was for husband hunting. I remember hearing the conversations, black and white.

Four random subjects were asked if they thought black students could have enrolled in New Jersey higher education institutions other than teachers colleges. All four—Gerry, Florence, George, and Moe (white)—said yes. Moe knew that “there were black students at Rutgers for years,” and George noted that African Americans had been at Rutgers and Upsala,⁷⁵ although many affluent students went to black colleges in the South. But when Florence was in the normal school in the late 1920s, she seriously doubted that her peers could have gone elsewhere—not only because of official policy, but “it was a matter of money. . . . We didn’t hold those jobs which would pay that much money so that the families could pay for their children.”

⁷⁴ Alma recalled that junior colleges were conducted all over the country during the Depression as part of President Roosevelt’s emergency relief program. She also knew that, following the demise of the emergency junior colleges, the National Youth Administration was continued in other colleges to provide employment for students. She was helped by both programs as she attended an emergency junior college and found work through the NYA.

⁷⁵ Beatrice Harvey ’42 MA earned her bachelor’s degree at Upsala College in 1929. She majored in Latin, minored in French, and was certified to teach. Her first position was in Virginia because she knew a job would not be offered in any New Jersey high school at that time (telephone conversation on 5/23/99).

Tuition Rate

The majority of subjects accurately recalled the tuition of \$100 per year or \$50 per semester. But one person thought it might have been \$75 per semester, another supposed it could not have been more than a few hundred dollars per year, and a third guessed that it was not more than \$200 per year. Seven people could not even venture a guess as to the amount, including a student whose physician father paid the bill. Several participants from the 1940s and 1950s made statements such as the following:

“Whatever it was, it was considered to be expensive.” “It seemed like an awful lot of money in those days.” “Even that was hard to pay.” “I know it was a lot—it wasn’t much, but for my family at the time it was a lot.”

Florence, who attended the Montclair Normal School in the 1920s, at first pegged tuition at \$100 per year. Later she realized while reviewing the catalog that no tuition at all had been charged, although \$100 per year was to be paid if a student failed to fulfill the pledge to teach in the state following graduation and was not “excused” from doing so. Frances, the doctor’s daughter who attended College High School, knew there was a “contingency fee” rather than tuition. She did not remember whether it was \$25 per month or per year, “but it was a nominal fee.” At \$25 per month, the annual total would have been an unlikely \$250—more than twice the amount of college tuition and hardly “nominal” to many of the college students, whose families struggled to pay for their education.

Financing of Education and Outside Commitments

Although not all interviewees responded to the question about how their educations were financed, half of the subjects (14 people) indicated that their parents

helped with college expenses, including two whose parents covered the cost entirely. Twenty-two participants worked to earn some of the required funds and 11 received scholarships in varying amounts.

The two whose parents paid everything were Katherine '34, whose father was a doctor and who had no responsibilities outside her schoolwork, and Jeannette '59, who did not work during her college years. Vernell '43 earned spending money by working on campus a few hours each week, holding summer jobs, and helping with the family business. But she stated: "In my family, you went to school to study. Dad and Mom would pay the bill." Similarly, Roberta '57 sensed that her parents wanted her to devote her time to college, although she too helped occasionally with the family business.

Most respondents worked to cover all or some portion of their college expenses. Of the 22 who said they held jobs either during the summer or during the academic year or both, 15 found at least part of their employment on campus through the National Youth Administration or the state, which administered the student work scholarship program when the federal government discontinued the NYA program after the Depression. At MSTC, both black and white students were employed in the library, departmental offices, cafeteria, dining room, and athletic facilities. During the NYA years of the 1930s, students apparently received actual paychecks. When the state took over the program, earnings were applied to the student's bill. According to one interviewee, the hours were monitored so that work did not interfere with the time required for studying.

Bernice '53 recalled her experience with on-campus employment. "I tried to be a waitress. . . . After I dropped the tray, . . . they said, 'We'll find another job!'" Lillian '57 "applied for a work scholarship in the [dining room] so I could pay off my room and board. But it really didn't come to anything. I was not suitable as a waitress!" Both of

them found office work on campus instead. Even so, Lillian noted with regret that she had to withdraw from a course on Shakespeare's major plays because:

We'd have to go see certain plays and I knew financially I couldn't go into New York and see the plays that were going to be required. . . . In addition, they were going to go up to Connecticut where the Shakespeare Festival would be. And I couldn't attend. I mean, I knew that financially some miracle would have to happen.

Government work scholarships usually were not sufficient to cover a student's financial needs completely, and many worked off campus as well. Some students found ad hoc employment with faculty members in their homes. For example, Moe '49 (white) helped two professors by insulating an attic and installing a furnace. A few of the women babysat for local families or student-veterans who lived in a village on campus after World War II.

A number of students worked at various jobs near their homes. Thelma A '44 picked farm crops in the summer and helped a doctor's wife with home chores. Moe '49 (white) held several positions, including weekend companion for a young retarded man. He also thoroughly enjoyed his work as a busboy and short-order cook at two local restaurants. His classmate George '49 had worked for a couple of years before entering college, saving enough to buy a car and pay his first two years of tuition. Then he too needed a job and served as a busboy at a local Montclair restaurant. But "at that time black people were not allowed to eat in the Wedgewood Cafeteria, and I felt guilty all the time." Two young men held similar positions during the same years, but their feelings about the jobs were quite dissimilar.

Ethel M '48, a commuter, earned enough by babysitting to pay her entire tuition. She supplemented that income by clerical work one summer in a government office in Newark that paid more than \$40 a week—an impressive salary when tuition was only \$100 a year. Vernell '43 was hired for a summer job in the Office of Dependency

Benefits in Newark (where Thelma A '44 also worked immediately after graduation while awaiting a teaching position).

In the 1930s, black students could not find part-time jobs at Newark department stores unless they worked the elevators or passed for white, as did Norma '33 at Bamberger's. Even in the early 1940s, Vernell '43 was unable to secure a post at Woolworth's. In the late 1940s, Marilyn '46 found that Kresge's was hiring "very attractive black women" to operate the elevators, and they offered her such a position. "I said, 'No, I don't want that. I don't want to do that.' So they made me a cashier wrapper."⁷⁶ By the 1950s, five black female students were working in Newark stores such as Kresge's and Klein's.⁷⁷

Bernice '53 was one of the Klein's employees. She also had a towel concession in the women's restroom of an upscale restaurant for a time. She and her friends, both black and white, frequented the nearby Bond's ice cream shop. Bernice remarked, "I don't think we could have gotten jobs down at Bond's. . . . Several of the [white] girls worked down there, but I mean, *we* just didn't—I figured it was almost like an understood thing." As an afterthought, she added with laughter, "And after my waitress experience, I wasn't sure if I could have that kind of experience anyway!"

In response to a question about scholarships, four subjects declared that none were available to black students. Vernell '43 said, "I don't think there were any scholarships then." Thelma A '44, who had moved to New Jersey from Virginia, reported that a scholarship was announced in her high school, but "the janitor's daughter

⁷⁶ The father of Marilyn had died when she was a toddler and her mother was seriously ill, necessitating Marilyn's personal attention as well as her employment during college. "I had all the pressures on the outside of rushing home to see if my mother was okay . . . and the money situation was always tight."

⁷⁷ Although Audrey '43 (white) did not work at Klein's, one spring her mother bought prom dresses there for several other students who could not afford them.

got it because they said although she didn't have the academic background that I had, she had been with them from the beginning. . . . She was white and I was not, and I always felt that that was probably the reason."

George '49 observed, "Scholarships were nothing that was ever discussed with me by my guidance counselor or anyone." Joyce '56 mused that race "probably affected scholarships. We did not get scholarships." However, aside from the governmental work-study opportunities, seven of the 11 subjects in this study who did receive actual scholarships were African American. In addition, Gloria Vaughan Curry '51, who was not a subject, received a full-year state scholarship.

Each of the four white interviewees—all of whom were students during the 1940s—obtained scholarship assistance. Audrey '43 received a full four-year state scholarship for tuition. The family of Marie '43 was "very, very poor. The Depression had really taken my father for a ride." She was awarded \$100 for her first year's tuition by the College Women's Club of the town of Montclair. Irv '49 and Moe '49 used the GI Bill. (Moe later used a second GI Bill from his service in the Korean War for his master's degree.)

In contrast, all of the African Americans who received scholarships attended MSTC in the 1950s. Gwen '53 was given a scholarship by the College Club of Mountain Lakes to live on campus for one semester. Thelma C '53 was sponsored by the local Tri-High-Y Club for part of her tuition, room, and board expenses. Bernice '53 had scholarships of \$100 each from a sorority in Atlantic City and from her church, which covered tuition for the first two years. Howard '56 was awarded a \$50 scholarship from his church. Lillian '57 had a state scholarship for her first semester. Roberta '57 received a scholarship from the auxiliary women's group of a men's lodge that covered her book expenses for all four years. She also had a full four-year state scholarship for

tuition although, to her immense disappointment, it was rescinded after she was out of school for the second half of her freshman year due to serious illness.

I have very few negative memories, but this is one of them. [When I returned to Montclair in September,] I remember walking into the gentleman's office to check on the scholarship and he just kind of glanced up at me and said, "Oh, you lost that." . . . It seemed it was a technicality of the fact that I did not register for that next semester, that the scholarship was probably given to someone else. . . . But what I remember as negative is the gentleman seemed rather cold in the way he told me. . . . I can still see the look on his face and remember very clearly how I felt.

On the advice of a white high school counselor, Reuben '59 applied for a scholarship from Alpha Phi Alpha, a black fraternity. He was interviewed by Dr. J. Thomas Flagg, a graduate of MSTC, and awarded the scholarship. In addition, he obtained welfare assistance after he married because he was unable to continue working to support his family while practice teaching.⁷⁸

Although Bernice '53 did not come from a wealthy family, her father paid for room and board; her two scholarships covered two years of tuition; and she worked on campus to pay for books and other expenses. She stated, "Money was really not an issue for me during Montclair. . . . My sister sent me money once a month when she got paid, so . . . I always had money on hand. And most of the girls did not." She was the only subject who made such a statement about finances, and she cheerfully shared her bounty with her friends.

⁷⁸ Reuben's situation contrasted quite favorably with earlier generations of college students who married before graduating. According to Audrey '43 (white), "If you were coming to a state school to be educated, they felt that if you were engaged or planned to be married, or were married, you had to leave." She cited the case of a couple in her class, one of whom had to leave when they became engaged. When asked which one, she responded, "Oh—the woman!" But by 1950, a black female student who married before graduation was permitted to remain, and about eight years later Reuben was receiving governmental assistance to support his family during practice teaching when he was newly married.

Institutional Experiences

Following a general description of a typical day, the questions about institutional experiences were arranged to explore, in turn, the subject's academic and social life on campus. Responses in this section constitute the "heart" of participants' feelings about what it was like to be an African American student at Montclair State Teachers College.

Typical Day

There was significant agreement among interviewees that the college structure was similar to that in their high schools. There was only one classroom building and classes were held five days a week. Having declared a major, they remained with the same group for virtually all their courses, which limited interaction with other students but fostered a strong cohesiveness within the major. All students had to observe master teachers in College High School and, during some years, attend regular chapel or assembly programs. Between and after classes, they were free to socialize, study, work, or engage in organized extracurricular activities. Details of their recollections follow.

A typical day for resident students began with breakfast in Russ Hall. For commuters, the day started much earlier as they left home to travel by various means to reach their first class on time, ending with a trudge up the final hill on which the college was located. Many students took one or more buses from home to Newark, and then caught the number 60 for the last leg of a long journey to the campus. Others took the train (the "Weary Erie") or carpooled. The commute was unusual for George '49 in that he drove his own car the first two years. Florence '28, the only normal school student in this study, also was the only one who remembered arriving by trolley car. It ran down Valley Road, with the last stop at Normal Avenue where the school was located atop a hill. "We used to call it a baby carriage. It wasn't like the ordinary big [trolley] cars that

went down Bloomfield Avenue. It was flat, close to the ground. It had rounded edges. That's why we called it a baby carriage."⁷⁹

Several subjects described the college as being similar to high school. Gwen '53 said: "Montclair was like a glorified high school. . . . You went to classes and you had lunch. . . . We went back to class and then went home." Reuben '59 recalled that "it was pretty much an easy step from high school into college. . . . Your day was pretty much set." Ethel B '57 "really considered it like a glorified high school" and Roberta '57 also said, "It was like more high school, really—not that the program wasn't rigorous. It was." Gerry '53 remembered "everything being routine—cut and dried."

In the earlier years, two periods were "set apart each week for the general assembly of students. During these periods students, faculty and outside talent participate. Attendance is required" (*Catalog* 1928-29 28). Florence '28 was the star of one such chapel program when she recited "the story about the Christ of the Andes . . . maybe it took about four minutes." On another day, she arranged a visit from a concert singer who lived in Montclair and "whose husband was Dr. Peter Murray, a well-known surgeon, a black man, in New York. . . . How that lady could sing! . . . I loved it and the girls loved it."

Also in the late 1920s, one of the "outside talents" was A. N. Palmer of penmanship fame. For the legion of students who did not care for penmanship exercises, he was persona non grata despite his eminence (Kathleen O'Brien Kimble '27 – white). In 1930, Principal Sprague joined three faculty members on the stage to sing several selections as the "Celestial Quartette" (*Pelican* 4/10/30). Another speaker was Louis

⁷⁹ Wilma Lindlof Schulz '24 (white) and her friends called it the "Toonerville Trolley." It reminded them of the trolley in a comic strip created by Fontaine Fox in 1915 and the subsequent popular film series in 1920-23.

Ginsberg, “a contemporary poet of distinction, who will give a lecture based on his own poetry. Mr. Ginsberg has been widely known among American poets since 1920” (*Montclarion* 1/12/33). By 1950, students were “expected to participate regularly” in assembly programs (*Catalog* 1950-52 32), but not required to do so, and only Florence and Marilyn ’46 spoke about such events.⁸⁰

Free periods were spent in various ways. In the normal school years, Florence ’28 could be found outdoors with garden tools because students who failed to weed their nature study gardens risked having their names published on Laura Woodward’s warning list.⁸¹ Norma ’33 said, “I spent all the time I could in the library. Zaidee Brown [the librarian] knew me very well.” Some headed to the recreation room, where they played games (ping-pong or cards), talked, and smoked. George ’49 could be found in the “Pub Office” that housed all student publications.

Others congregated on the campus grounds. Matthew ’54 and a small group of fellow social studies majors “used to spend a lot of time sitting on the lawn between classes and studying.” Vernell ’43 remembered sitting in the outdoor amphitheater that had been built by the federal Works Progress Administration. “Oh, we had a great time in the amphitheater.” Joyce ’56 agreed: “The amphitheater was very popular in my day.” Roberta ’57 recalled that “from the end of College Hall back, everything was woods. So we lived in the amphitheater and the grounds around College Hall. We’d sit

⁸⁰ The 1951 yearbook reported on rumors “that there would soon be compulsory attendance at assemblies. The storm of protest was torrential: The idealist said it was undemocratic; the realist said 1300 students would never fit in the gymnasium; the Administration implied that the assembly programs would reach a larger audience if they were presented in the Valley Diner. The realists won the battle.”

⁸¹ Grace Layer Shorter ’16 (white) also mentioned that “the large open tract behind the college was almost like a biology classroom for we spent many classes there. Each student was allotted a small space where we planted radishes, doing all the necessary digging, etc., ourselves.” It was the site of nature study conducted under the auspices of Miss Woodward and her predecessors.

outside or we'd sit in the cafeteria between classes. We were always together. We were a very close group."

Still others spent free time working for faculty and staff members to offset expenses. Residents such as Bernice '53 and Thelma C '53 returned to their rooms to study or nap, but Lillian '57 said, "You didn't go back to the dorm. You stayed on campus in the academic area." That may have been because, as a speech major, she would "have extra things we could do. We could go and work on stage arts, stage craft."

At College High School, the pupils "were very much on our own. . . . We were treated almost like mini-college students" and given a great deal of independence, said Frances '52 (CHS). "The students who were training to be teachers would just sit in the back of the room and observe how the class was run by the professor," many of whom were the college's department heads. Frances did not think the presence of the college students in her classes impacted on her educational experience because "we didn't see them."

In the mid-afternoon, all classes were over. Then clubs, sports, musical groups, dances, Student Government Association meetings, and other activities were available. Many commuters, however, were unable to participate in extracurricular events due to public transportation schedules and the hours required for the return trip home. Norma '33 spoke for many of her peers in noting, "As soon as the school day ended, I rushed home." As Matthew '54 recalled, "I always made sure that I was out of class by 3:00 because I had to get that bus back down to Newark or get a ride back down to Newark," from which he departed by train to western New Jersey. For Roberta '57, the long commute on two buses "worked for me too, because that's when I studied and read."

Thelma C '53, a resident, made it a point to seek out the commuters. "A lot of times, you knew them and so you tried to find them or they tried to find you so you could

spend some time with them.” On the other hand Juanita ’51, also a resident, said, “We didn’t have that much contact with the commuting students.” She stayed close to a small group of four or five dormitory friends, “all white, except for me.” Obviously, a student’s individual personality and needs influence the style of interaction with others.

Residents ate dinner in Russ Hall. Audrey ’43 (white), a student waitress, remembered: “We had a lovely dining room with white linen and napkins and tablecloths, and sang a blessing. And it was really a very wonderful experience.” In the evenings, they did their homework and enjoyed friendships in the residence halls. Audrey had a fond recollection that “the fellows would serenade under the windows” with tunes such as “Pull Your Shades Down, Mary Ann.” Joyce ’56 remembered this tradition, too: “Everybody knew almost everybody. At night, one of the fraternities [Agora] used to sing on campus and we’d yell the names of songs we wanted to hear out of the dorm buildings.”⁸² Her favorite was “September Song.”

On weekends, residents created imaginative social pastimes, although some chose to return home. Lillian ’57 said, “I came home almost all weekends. I was just so homesick most of the time and I loved seeing my mom.” Others were involved in hometown activities and relationships that lured them back on the weekends.

Full- or Part-time Status

All interviewees were full-time students. However, because tuition was charged as a flat fee, many students took more than the full load of 128 credits required for graduation, at no extra charge. An examination of the 22 available transcripts reveals a

⁸² The 1948 yearbook reports that “after each meeting [of Agora] dorm girls listen for the serenade of traditional campus songs” (24).

range of 128 to 162 credits, with an average of 137 per student. Joyce said that “most of us were getting extra credits to make sure that we had enough to graduate, because I remember there was one girl in my class who had exactly—exactly—enough credits to graduate, and she was very unusual.” She considered the extra credits to be cushions against failing a course “or we had time on our hands. I don’t know which, but we all, I’m sure, got extra credits.”

Moe (white) had a different reason for taking “a full load plus.” He expected—based on an oral agreement with a professor—to earn a bachelor’s and a master’s degree simultaneously. Unfortunately, the professor departed to teach at another college and did not recall the arrangement when President Sprague asked Moe to provide proof prior to his graduation. He received only a bachelor’s degree.

Academic Performance

Eight subjects judged their work to be excellent or above average. This group included the College High School pupil and all the college students who graduated with honors, plus one who did not get honors but still considered her grades to be good despite her assertion that she was not “bright.” Only one person believed she did not perform as well as her classmates and six did not answer the question directly. Nearly half of the subjects (13) considered their academic performance to be satisfactory or average.

Some stated directly that they chose to make the most of the full range of college opportunities by not focusing entirely on academics. Without being consciously aware of it, others may have been proving the theory that many working class students deliberately attempt to appear “average” to preserve their acceptance in one or more groups. In the case of MSTC students, such groups could have been their classmates and/or the home community whose occupants, in all likelihood, had neither been to college nor, perhaps,

to high school. Conversely, those who excelled may have been motivated by the determination to prove that they were as capable as white students and to make their families and friends proud of their accomplishments.

Three of the four white interviewees placed themselves among the highest achievers. Marie “put a lot of time in my homework” and, when asked to compare her performance with that of her classmates, responded modestly: “Well, the only way I can tell you is here is my graduation program and the honors are on the back.” She had graduated cum laude. Audrey, who also graduated cum laude, said: “When Dr. Davis handed back the first math test in the first course, and I had the highest grade, I was ‘in’ as far as my own confidence went.” Yet she thought her ability and motivation were no greater than those of her classmates. “We were all students. There weren’t many who were not students.” Likewise, Irv acknowledged that he had performed “well” (he graduated magna cum laude), but classified his work in comparison with others as just “average.”

Among the African American subjects who ranked themselves in the high-achieving group was Frances, the College High School pupil. She explained that “the college students kind of felt we were not typical, because you had to pass an examination to get into College High.” When she earned all A’s in the first marking period in seventh grade, the pleasure was diminished because “I felt like I was a freak of some sort” as the other children crowded around to see her report. She did not know “whether it was because I was black and had gotten all A’s or if my ethnicity entered into it at all.”

In the college group, Lillian echoed Audrey in saying, “I was a student.” She loved to achieve and studied hard to compensate for not being “bright”; her reward was that “my grades were good.” (Indeed, she received only 4 C’s in a sea of A’s and B’s.) Vernell started out with average grades in her first semester, and her mother questioned,

“Six B’s and a C. Why the C?” Her father said, “I know you’re unhappy about the C. You’re never going to get another C, right?” Vernell observed, “So, that’s the way my family was. And then, of course, I got better and better and better.” She graduated cum laude and, although “the competition was very, very keen,” considered herself “a very fine student” who “enjoyed the work and found it not threatening at all.” When Norma was asked to compare her academic performance with that of others, she said simply, “Well, I graduated magna cum laude.” For Roberta:

It was shaky in my major, to begin with. . . . I was doing fine in everything else, and I began to think to myself, “Should I change my major?” . . . But then, something clicked and it just turned around for me, and I just took off after that and stayed on until I graduated cum laude and was very comfortable academically.

Among those who felt themselves to be average students academically was Jeannette who stated—as had Marie (in another context), Audrey, and Lillian—that “all students out here were conscientious. . . . We were students.” Therefore, she classified her own work and that of others as “all probably average. . . . But I did good work.” Thelma A thought her performance “was about the same or better” than that of her classmates. Gerry maintained B grades and “felt as capable as others,” placing herself “somewhere in the middle.” Thelma C acknowledged, “I wasn’t the valedictorian. But I was satisfied because I was challenged and I wanted to learn.” Other “average” students offered comments such as the following. “I performed satisfactorily” (Katherine). “I think I was average. . . . I was a much better student in high school than I was in college. . . . College was just harder, and again, commuting took a lot of energy and time I think” (Gwen). “What kind of grades did I get? Not bad” (Joyce). “I was generally a good student. Not fantastic, but a good student” (Florence).

Marilyn surmised, “We were all about average, I would say. If we were any better, we didn’t talk about it. We didn’t mention it, you know. That wasn’t the cool

thing to do.” However, she acknowledged that one black student who was not a part of this study, Theresa David, earned the admiration of others because, cool or not, “she was outstanding in her language field.” Marilyn attributed some of her own average status to the fact that she worked at a job off campus. “That was a bit of a chore. So I was always trying to catch up . . . with my school work.”

Like Vernell, other participants noted that their mediocre early work improved over the years. Ethel M said, “I probably started out average and . . . got to be a slightly better student.” Howard observed, “I made the normal progression. As I got into my junior and senior year of college, my grades went way up.” Patricia declared the first semester a disaster. “It was really devastating for me to receive a D, because I had never received a D. . . . Dr. Bohn explained to me that I had a lot of innate ability but there comes a time when you have to buckle down and work. I took his advice. . . . After that, it was fine.” Ethel B admitted that in her junior year “I realized that I had goofed around for the first two years and I should have done a little better. So I did a little better academically.” She was the only interviewee who ranked herself lower than her classmates in academic performance. “Oh, I think they did better. I think they had a more serious attitude toward their academics than I did.”

Four interviewees specifically stated that their average performance was by choice—they wanted to spend time on activities other than studying. George reported: “Yeah, I was busy. That’s why I say I could have gotten higher grades, but I wanted all of college and I wouldn’t—the activities were part of it and sometimes I neglected other things for the activities. I admit it.” Juanita said, “I was a B student at Montclair; I did not put in the kind of energy into my studies in Montclair that I did in high school. . . . I wanted to do other things other than just straight academics.” Matthew said, “I was a country boy, and when I got down there and saw all the things that there were to do in

Montclair, I really didn't apply myself to college." And Moe (white) stated cheerfully: "Probably I was a B student, but that didn't bother me really, because I wasn't there for grades. I was there to learn, and I learned. I had a marvelous time!"

Reuben "always thought that I was smarter than what was indicated by my transcript" and Bernice "didn't do as well as I should have." In the latter's case, "I came in here, you know, a top student and I did a lot of fooling around." Nevertheless, both of them pointed with pride to their "A" grades for student teaching. Reuben said, "I've proven that they taught me how to be a teacher." Bernice quoted her professor: "He says, 'You're a born teacher,' and I guess I was."

Feelings in the Classroom

No African American subjects acknowledged feeling generally unaccepted in the classroom, and many elaborated on why they did feel comfortable. Their reasons included the excellence of teaching and the courses themselves; their confidence in being able to measure up to academic standards; and their familiarity with being black in a white world. For some participants, the possibility of acceptance or nonacceptance in the classroom was a nonissue and outside the realm of their consideration as students.

However, a few indicated discomfort in some classes or in certain situations. These included subtle suggestions of bigotry from a few professors, the responsibility of representing the black race, being more "visible" than white students, and feeling frustrated with course content such as the idea of democracy when those conceptions were merely abstractions in the lives of many African Americans.

On the positive side were comments such as the following. Joyce stated that her sense of acceptance in the classroom "was really very good. . . . I felt very much at home there. I really did. It [the fact of her race] never came up." Katherine said: "I was very

comfortable in the classroom. I liked my teachers and I enjoyed the companionship of students in the classes, so I was very comfortable. . . . I was very happy.” When Gwen was asked if she experienced anything from her teachers that would give her reason to feel unaccepted, she replied: “No, my teachers at Montclair were excellent.” Thelma A remembered that “in the classroom, all was good. It was good. I felt very comfortable . . . because I knew academically I could do well and I did do well.” Florence said, “I felt very good—with me and them. The girls were very nice.” Marilyn felt comfortable in the classroom because “as far as classes were concerned, they were all pretty much acceptable.” She added, “In retrospect I can’t give you anything that comes to mind now that was unpleasant while I was in school there. It was a very pleasant time, as a matter of fact. I mean, I enjoyed it.”

George was enthusiastic. “I was never uncomfortable at Montclair—not for one minute. I loved it.” Vernell seemed to feel the same.

In the classroom, I found the professors superb, gracious, welcoming, inclusive. I never had a minute where I felt that the teacher was unfair. . . . I never felt that they talked down to us. I think they enjoyed what they were teaching. I think they were fair.

When Lillian was asked if she personally felt accepted in the classrooms, she replied: “Absolutely. . . . I know I was very comfortable. I was, absolutely. . . . I liked that there was ample attention given to us. You didn’t fall through any cracks. . . . You’d have to struggle to be unhappy.” Norma answered the question by saying, “Yes, yes, yes. . . . I was happy here and I think the other students were too. . . . I enjoyed all my classes and I felt very secure.” Howard said simply, “It was adequate. I was accepted.” Patricia stated, “I felt very good. . . . As far as I knew, we were made welcome and felt accepted.”

Five interviewees mentioned the distinct feelings of acceptance among their fellow majors, with whom they spent a great deal of time. Gerry said, “I felt comfortable

and accepted in the Math Department. . . . The way the campus was set up, each department had its own little space. . . . There was little interaction between departments.” In fact, the majors within a given class were so much together that she did not even know other mathematics majors who were in classes ahead of or behind her. Alma (responding for her deceased husband Tom) and Reuben both saw a significant closeness among the science majors. Alma recalled that the science “professors enjoyed working with them, making them work, and also being very human and contributing to their development at the same time, with humor and so on. . . . They had good times in the labs, definitely.” Reuben said:

In the Science Department, of course, we were more collegial in my opinion. . . . So I never felt that I was out of place or being left out. . . . I think the music majors were close in the same way that the science majors were close. . . . I never felt left out. I always felt wanted, you know—people sort of smiled when I came up. No one seemed to frown.

Lillian noted with regard to the speech majors: “We were so small a group. . . . We were coddled and it was wonderful!” And Thelma C stated, “Especially in the major courses, I felt accepted.”

Some black subjects reported slightly negative feelings. Juanita answered the question of her comfort level in the classroom by saying, “*Most* of the time fine. I had some pretty good . . . classroom experiences, depending upon the courses. . . . I had a pretty good comfort level.” Frances stated that *most* of the professors “treated me like any other student.” Lillian cited one course in which she felt discomfort because of an experience her older brother had had with the professor, not because of anything that happened to her. “I don’t remember any other class . . . that made me feel wounded or uncomfortable.” Ethel M, who was very fair-skinned, remembered:

In the beginning, I really was not totally comfortable. . . . People didn’t know what [race] I was, even though I wasn’t hiding the fact. And I was occasionally

mistaken. . . . I would find that I had to clarify not exactly who I was, but to take a stand in a discussion that I felt was going wrong.

Yet she turned her discomfort into a learning and growing experience.

I gained more confidence in speaking out when I felt something was unfair. . . . The very first week here at Montclair . . . I remember something being said that was about how blacks felt about the war and it was—it hurt me, and I just sat up and said, “That’s not true.” And then the other students realized that I was black and then, you know, a whole different atmosphere developed around me.

Nevertheless, in the classroom itself, she did not feel singled out as being different from any other student. “I didn’t feel at all uncomfortable that way, no. I always felt that somehow you gained a little extra measure of respect instead.”

Bernice responded to the question of her acceptance in the classroom by saying, “Generally I was. I remember one incident. Stewart was her name. She taught what we called Civ and Cit” (Civilization and Citizenship).

I said to her, “I would like to know why it is that when we have discussions . . . you call on people and then you say, ‘*And Miss Mallory.*’ . . . I expect to be treated the same as everybody else—no better, no worse. And when I hear ‘*and Miss Mallory, what do you think?*’ Okay, here’s my group—that’s valid—now let’s see what this other one thinks.” And I don’t feel that she was just being prejudicial. . . . I didn’t notice it right away. . . . But once I did, oh, I stomped in there! . . . That’s my style!

Miss Stewart apparently saw the light, and then: “I think she was afraid to call on me at all! . . . I started waving my hand at her. . . . I think it took a little while because I made her nervous!”

Ethel M related an experience connected with a speech class assignment to prepare a three-minute talk that would appeal to the emotions of the audience. Her oldest brother, a serviceman, had just returned home accompanied by a fellow black soldier. With the men still in uniform, she joined them on an outing to a hamburger place.

We were so happy and excited we didn’t realize nobody was waiting on us. And then after a while, my brother just said, “Can we place an order?” And they said, “You could sit here all night before you would get served.” . . . So there was my speech for the next morning; but you know, it was a horrible experience.

Her audience, the students in her class, showed their support in that “you could hear a pin drop, and they just sort of sat there. They were dumbfounded, as I was.”

Matthew felt slightly different from his classmates because “I was always the first one that the teachers knew the name.” As the only African American “in a class of 20 or 30 people I am easily recognizable, so always the professor knew my name and called me by name. So I couldn’t be absent and, you know, have somebody else sit in my chair! I couldn’t do that. It just didn’t work.” But woe to the unobservant professor faced with *two* black students in a class. Thelma C recalled a case of mistaken identity. “The professor had us mixed up. He would call her name and look at me. So we had to get that straight because I wanted my grade and she wanted hers!” She laughed and added, “It wasn’t demeaning. It was just something that we knew. . . . In the eyes of Caucasians, many black people look the same. . . . It was something that could have been a problem, but it wasn’t.”

A few participants noted that they had no issues with classroom acceptance because they were fully accustomed to being black in a white world. In Gwen’s words:

I always felt very comfortable and very accepted, because I’m one of those people, I guess, that from the time I was a little girl, I preferred not to hate. I was always the only dark face around . . . and I was friends with everybody, and I felt that I was accepted at Montclair quite well. . . . I had white friends and . . . I’ve always gotten along with all kinds of people, so I’ve never felt uncomfortable. Let’s put it that way. I just feel like everybody else.

Howard observed, “I knew what I was about. I had no feelings of inadequacy as far as being black was concerned. . . . Being black was nothing new in a white world.” Bernice, who said she was “generally” comfortable in the classroom, added: “I might have had some experiences that were different from some people by virtue of being black because, believe me, being black in America is quite [*laughter*] whatever.” Patricia described herself thus: “I’ve always had a very positive outlook. . . . I sort of get along with people.

. . . I've always felt this way about people. I like people; I try to understand them." Then she stated her philosophy of living in a white world.

It's like speaking two languages. I am black. I've been brought up a lot in black society. But I've also been brought up in white society and it's like learning a foreign language. You learn to interpret both and to recognize things that exist. . . . To be black and to be able to think white is like being able to speak a second language. I am black and I can think white—divorce myself from my color and think as a white person.

When asked if she had ever encountered white people who could do the reverse, Patricia responded:

Not as much, no. . . . They haven't had that much exposure to a person of another race. It would be nice if they could. I mean, it might facilitate things; it might make things much easier if you could interpret another race as you do your own—understand another race. . . . In order to solve race relationships, you have to solve *human* relationships.

Some interviewees shared their feelings about the academic rather than personal aspects of classroom experiences. Matthew said, "I don't remember being bored in any classes, except for one." Joyce expressed appreciation for the teaching style of her professors. "I realized that at Montclair they did a lot of integrating how to teach it and the subject itself."⁸³ Florence said her teachers "were all so good." Katherine was full of praise for the Foreign Language Department, saying that although "some of the liberal arts colleges . . . had an exchangeship," MSTC was "one of the few teachers colleges to have this foreign exchange program." Jeannette said:

I really appreciate the courses they had here. I mean, Montclair was good in terms of academic courses, literature. There were no watered-down classes and I appreciate that. . . . I'm glad that they had a standard here at Montclair that I could feel comfortable teaching anybody anywhere.

⁸³ At MSTC, "the emphasis in curriculum has consistently been placed upon the academic preparation of the teacher rather than the methodology of teaching" (Davis 171). The methodology preparation was addressed largely in having the prospective teachers observe master teachers in College High School, although there were actual methods courses as well.

But Reuben mentioned that

a course called Civilization and Citizenship was not very interesting to me when kids were trying to go to school in Little Rock—you know, to tell me about democracy when that's going on in Little Rock—I couldn't handle that. I mean, I went to class but I didn't really believe what the professor was saying.

Several subjects mentioned that part of the curriculum involved observations at College High School, where the best college faculty members taught pupils in grades seven through 12. Frances, who was enrolled in College High School, regarded her classmates on the whole as brighter than average high school pupils. Lillian felt almost intimidated by them and exclaimed: "Those children were brilliant! And the things [Dr. Bohn would] elicit from them! . . . But you'd realize . . . that you could catch up, you could get there, but you'd have to work at it and that's exactly what he wanted."

Although the teachers-in-training generally did not instruct the high school classes, there were at least three exceptions. In her senior year, Norma taught several units of Latin for the tenth graders. Reuben taught one science class. Moe (white) taught tenth grade English for a professor during his medical leave. Moe noticed from the pupils' records that their IQ scores were exceptionally high (although he later indicated that admission to College High School became less selective and more democratic in the 1950s). The unusual abilities of the pupils proved to be problematic for some college students who felt rather unprepared when faced later with their own classes of typical high schoolers. For example, Jeannette said:

You do your student work at College High—which are bright students, probably rich students, certainly above level students. . . . Then you get your first job in Newark . . . [and] the requirements are not the same. . . . You have to start to do your lesson plan according to the environment and the students you're dealing with. And then, in working with social problems, again thank God for NAACP because I was sensitive to the social problems. I wouldn't have gotten any training in that from classes.

Still, in retrospect, she was “kind of glad” that the emphasis in the classroom was on subject mastery rather than social problems. “If I had a choice, I’d want to insist on high academic classes for a teacher. A teacher has to know her subject.”

Ethel B dismissed altogether the question of her feelings of acceptance in the classroom. The important point of acceptance for her was being admitted to the college in the first place.

I didn’t pay too much attention to whether I was accepted or not accepted because my professors, they were so on target as to what they were doing that I couldn’t sit around, you know, and figure out what’s going on and what people were thinking or anything. . . . It never entered my mind whether I was being accepted or not accepted. I was there to do a job and that was it. . . . Anything else that happened after that [being admitted to Montclair], I was accepted. It was very hard to get into Montclair State. It was extremely hard.

Roberta also had difficulty with the concept of acceptance.

My family is mixed. I was raised in a multicultural environment, with no one [race] predominating. Race was not an element in my family. . . . People were people. I was raised that way, so I never—I didn’t look for it. . . . So, as far as acceptance, I expected nothing but that because that’s all I had ever experienced.

Among the white subjects, Marie could not answer the question with regard to her black colleagues. “I just don’t know whether they were well accepted by the other students.” Her white classmate Audrey said that the lone black student in their class of 1943, Vernell, had never mentioned any negative classroom experiences.

And I kind of probably would be surprised if she did. . . . And I would not have thought to even ask her. It was not that kind of an atmosphere. . . . We had a lot in common when we came, because a lot of us were Depression children. And we were here because of the finances. . . . And we were here really because we could be here. . . . We had all been accustomed to being, you know, near the top of our classes. So that I think that made it more of a commonality than anything that would have separated us because of the skin color.

Irv (white) did not think black students had any difficulty in the science classes, but granted that there may have been some discomfort in social studies or other courses where “issues” were discussed. Moe (white) said:

As far as I can remember, most of them got along fine. . . . There were a couple of professors, I think, who were slightly biased and may have taken it out on them in the grade book. . . . But, outside of that, most of the professors were fairly reasonable.

Gerry, Florence, Juanita, Reuben, and Jeannette concurred with Moe regarding grades. Gerry believed a particular professor had a personal policy of not awarding A or B grades to African Americans. “I got my first D from Dr. Lampkin (science). Notice I didn’t use the word *earned*.” Juanita suspected that she should have received higher grades in a couple of courses, attributing her scores partly to racism but also to her own lack of effort. Reuben believed some of his C grades should have been B’s and mused: “When I think back at it, I think that there was more racism than I saw” at the time. And although Jeannette felt “pretty much accepted” in the classroom, she added: “I do think that probably some of the white students were almost graded higher or something because they were white. . . . You know, that subtle kind of thing.”

The most concrete example was provided by Florence, who had copies of three of her written assignments from 1926. Each paper had four sub-grades for spelling, punctuation, choice of words, and paragraph and sentence structure. The 12 sub-grades included five A’s, two B’s, and five “good.” Yet each paper had an overall grade of C. She “had a feeling” the C’s were based on her race rather than the quality of her work, but “just went along” without questioning them (except once in arithmetic).

Self-assessment of Reliability of Feelings

Frisch (12) noted that “the further the generalizations are located from the crisis itself—people reflecting about it, rather than remembering how they thought about it themselves—the greater the tendency to present the past experience in a variety of romanticized modes.” Thus, as a gentle entreaty to put oneself into the actual feelings of

the past experiences, interviewees were asked to consider if the feelings they conveyed now were the actual feelings they experienced during college or possibly an interpretation of those feelings through a filter of 40, 50, 60, or 70 intervening years.

All who responded to this question were certain they remembered accurately. For example, Joyce asserted, “No, they were feelings I had during college.” Norma likewise maintained, “That’s an actual, accurate account of how I felt, yes.” Ethel M stated, “In regard to how I felt when I first came here, I think those are accurate feelings. I don’t think that my perspective changed over the years.” Vernell said, “I don’t think it’s a false or a kind of romanticized version” because her remembered feelings about Montclair were considerably different than those from the subsequent Howard University experience, where she had no trouble recalling a sense of great unhappiness. Juanita was certain she was not experiencing “the melodrama of the years.” George said he definitely was putting himself back into the situation and remembering how he felt at that time.

Ethel B said:

I don’t want to interpret in the intervening years. I want to go back to 1953, to 1957, and actually examine myself internally to see if there was anything that will say, well, something was done to me, for me, because of my race. . . . I didn’t want to glamorize it. I wanted to be as objective as I could, remembering what happened then.

Faculty and Staff Members

This rather lengthy section is intended to give a flavor of the feelings of students toward faculty and staff. Among the 28 interviewees, 64 faculty and staff members were recalled as special favorites and 12 names (some overlapping with the 64 favorites) were merely mentioned without being identified as either liked or disliked. However, each of the 10 people who were decidedly *disliked* by some subjects were also among the 64 cited by others as special favorites. In addition, there were two disliked professors whose

names had been forgotten while their misdeeds lived on in memory. Finally, one subject (Gerry) said she did not have any favorites. In summary, the reasons given for favoring certain faculty included the following:

- made the subject come alive
- command of the subject and the classroom (role model)
- dynamic, funny, sense of humor
- taught young people rather than the subject
- special attention to a student's particular needs
- inspiration to think deeply
- high standards and confidence that students could meet them
- looking a student in the eye and recognizing him or her as a person and taking

time to know students personally

- friendly and inviting students to their homes
- proactive in assisting in the job search

Five participants expressed appreciation for professors who had the confidence and concern to acknowledge and help them consider their African heritage. Interestingly, at least three teachers who were revered by some black subjects were suspected of subtle racism by others. These differences are another demonstration of the individuality within groups. As Howard put it in a different context: "We're just not one great monolithic group. . . . Without question there was as much divergence within the black community as there was in the white community."

The professor named most frequently garnered seven rave reviews, three questionable critiques, and one designation as the only professor who "reflected horribly" on Montclair State Teachers College. Five other faculty received most favored status from four, five, or seven former students, but the majority of professors were named by a

single person (33) or by two or three people (25). One reason for the long list of names with relatively little overlapping is the three-decade span of time covered by this study. No professor or staff member was known to all of the subjects (although five of the top faculty had long careers that put them in contact with more students than most of the other professors). Also, many of the professors who were named as favorites by just one or two people taught specialized courses that would have been taken only by majors in the discipline, whereas the highest vote-getters taught basic courses (English and social studies) that were required of all students.

The most-named professor was Harold Bohn, who arrived at Montclair in 1929—the year after Florence, the oldest subject, graduated—and retired in 1970. Thus, he had the potential to teach 27 of the 28 interviewees. His rave reviews included comments such as the following. “He was so dramatic and so interesting” (Ethel M). “He was great in the English Department” (Audrey – white). He “was probably one of the finest teachers I’ve ever seen . . . and he was a marvelous teacher. He made Shakespeare come alive” (Moe – white). He gave College High School pupils “the confidence that we were special people” (Frances). He was “delightful—just could make the literature come alive, bring some of the humor” (Roberta). One of the participants who had mixed feelings was Joyce, who got into an argument with him “about the photograph I was taking [for the yearbook]. . . . And he apologized to me for being really quite nasty. . . . He was a very good teacher—I will say that.” Lillian said he was “very firm” and observed: “Oh, he was much revered. People loved or hated him, I think, but nobody disrespected him. Everybody knew he was brilliant and he was respected for that.” Thelma A remembered that a club meeting was to be held at his home.

And he said to me, “You will feel comfortable at the meeting because our maid is black.” And at the time, I felt a little bad. But in thinking back over it, I think he was the one who was uncomfortable by having me there as a student—and yet he

may have thought of my being in a capacity of a servant, more like what he was used to.⁸⁴

Nevertheless, Thelma A said later in the interview: “Dr. Bohn was wonderful. I liked him. And he was the one who thought I would be comfortable as the maid.”⁸⁵ The final participant to mention Dr. Bohn was George, in a post-interview conversation. He believed the professor “reflected horribly” on Montclair after they “locked horns” on several occasions. George indicated that a black female student who was not a participant in this study also had negative experiences with Dr. Bohn in the classroom. However, in her capacity as president of Players (the campus drama club) and the professor’s role as the group’s advisor, they worked very well together. George concluded that Dr. Bohn did wonderful things on the stage, but not in the classroom.⁸⁶

The other professors who were mentioned most frequently were another English teacher, Lawrence Conrad, and four social studies teachers: Avaline Folsom, Elwyn Gage, Harley Milstead, and Ernest Fincher. Audrey (white) said in reference to Mr. Conrad: “Everybody loved him.” Thelma A was interviewed by Mr. Conrad prior to admission, and glanced at a checklist upon which he had given her the highest marks. “I felt really good about it.” George called Mr. Conrad and his other favorites “dynamic

⁸⁴ Dr. Bohn’s daughter, Emily-Ellen Mudryk (former College High School pupil and Assistant Registrar at Montclair State University at the time of this writing) does not remember that the family ever had a maid of any race. However, they may have had some temporary assistance when her brother was born, which would have been around the time mentioned by Thelma A.

⁸⁵ Ironically, Thelma A added, “one time we had a play at Montclair and I was the maid in the play, so it fits.”

⁸⁶ Moe (white)—a classmate of George, student of Dr. Bohn, and later his colleague on the English faculty—had the highest regard for the professor and believed any perceived racism would have been inadvertent on his part.

people.” Norma remembered him and others because “they taught young people rather than the subject.”⁸⁷ Moe (white) was in a class in which Mr. Conrad said:

“If I’m wrong on this, you can call me Uncle Gus!” And naturally, I thought he was wrong. And I worked for about a week and I came back with the evidence that he was wrong on that. And from that moment on, I didn’t call him Mr. Conrad. He was Uncle Gus.

The four revered social studies professors were honored with phrases such as the following. Regarding Dr. Folsom, Joyce considered her “quite a presence.” Marilyn said she

was so great. She just seemed to be such a scholar and so knowledgeable and so in control of whatever was happening in the class.⁸⁸ I had great admiration for her and she really got me started thinking seriously about the social studies field and not only that, but history in general.

Vernell hailed her as “an eye-opener—a little, wiry, brilliant woman” and said that “the first most interesting female [professor] I had was at Montclair.” Although Matthew also rated her highly, he remembered that

Dr. Folsom walked into the class, opened her brown notes, and started lecturing and lecturing. . . . She was teaching European history which, you know, didn’t change! . . . If you put your pencil down for a minute you lost 35 years of history! Yeah, that’s the way it was. You couldn’t miss a day and you had to pay attention to what she was saying because her tests were terrible. I mean hard. They were give-back type tests, but I learned a lot about European history that I didn’t know. . . . I needed to know that as a background for some of the other things that I was going learn.

Dr. Folsom was tough with Bernice, too.

I got a D in my major on a test, and the teacher pulled me in and she said, “What is your plan?” . . . She kept asking me what my plan was! . . . She’s picking on me—why is she picking on me? But she says, “They expect you to fail.” . . . I heard her and I went home and I got in that book and she said, “I’m going to give you a project for you to bring this D up.” . . . She had me research the European

⁸⁷ Compare the comment of a present-day faculty member who informed Judith Ramaley, president of the University of Vermont, “in an icy tone that he did not teach *students*; he taught *physics*” (Association of Governing Boards *Trusteeship*, March/April 2000 5).

⁸⁸ In another part of the interview, Marilyn expressed her great dismay at being unable to control her own class when she was a practice teacher.

entrance into the African nations. . . . “You’re going to make a presentation in class,” which I did. And a lot of the background I still have in my head came from that.

Although the topic had been touched on during class, “she made me dig it and go into all the background on it.” Bernice considered her a mentor.

Dr. Gage asked “thought questions” and Katherine “enjoyed his classes.” To Ethel M, “he just seemed so full of knowledge.” Audrey (white) remembered him as “a short man with a big booming background and confidence.” Thelma C regarded him and other favorites in the Social Studies Department with great esteem because “they sort of looked you in the eye and recognized you as a person. . . . Everyone was held to a very high standard.”

For Vernell, Dr. Milstead “was very, very good. We loved him.” Patricia agreed: “I liked Dr. Milstead very much.” To Bernice he was “a nutty guy” and Thelma C declared, “It was fun being in his class.” Howard said: “He was very close. In fact, he was the one who introduced me to my wife.”

Dr. Fincher invited students “to visit him at his home” (Matthew) and “tried very hard” to find a job for Bernice. Likewise for Ethel B, Dr. Fincher “was instrumental in getting me the job” and they developed “a mentor type of relationship.” To his credit as a teacher, Ethel B thought he considered her “the best pupil he ever had!”

Other professors were praised by fewer people, but with equal enthusiasm. Moe (white) described Ethel Littlefield as “probably one of the most brilliant women I have ever seen. . . . I loved her dearly. Of course, everybody did!” Some years later, when he introduced his fiancée to the elderly Miss Littlefield, the professor said, “Just remember, I saw him first!” According to Moe, “she worked until she was 75 because nobody here paid any attention to the fact that she had gone over the mandatory retirement age. At last some idiot down in Trenton finally figured it out.” Moe then said that his classmate

George “loved all of the professors I loved except Miss Littlefield. He loved her more than I did!”

In answering the question about favorite professors for himself, George immediately responded: “Oh, Lord, yes. Ethel Littlefield, whom I had for Latin and philology and phonetics, was an absolutely marvelous woman. And she was in—by my senior year, she was 70 or older, and they said she had to go. And oh, we wrote letters and we—but she still had to go.”⁸⁹ Norma also ranked the professor high on her list of favorites and relayed Miss Littlefield’s comment to a class that happened to consist of all women. “She said, ‘You know, I enjoy you girls so much. I love children. I wish I had had a child. I would have lived it down by now.’ . . . And had there been boys and men, young men, in the class, she wouldn’t have said it.”

Numerous other faculty members were esteemed by their students for various reasons. Harold Sloan “had a way of inspiring us to study and do well” (Katherine). Teresa de Escoriaza “was a character” (Gwen) and reminded Roberta of her European grandmother: “I was very attached to her beyond just being a professor. I felt the same from her.” Maurice Moffatt was “nice” (Gwen) and “so supportive of anything I wanted to do” (Bernice). For Juanita, Allan Morehead “was one of my favorites” and for Roberta, he “was just fun to be around and I enjoyed him.” He was Gwen’s supervisor for student teaching: “I can remember him telling my superintendent here in Boonton, thinking about hiring me, ‘You’d better grab her up or somebody else will.’ I thought, that’s a great recommendation. Oh, he was great.”

⁸⁹ President Partridge agreed that Miss Littlefield was “a most unusual teacher” (1980). However, according to Jesse Young in the office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs at MSU, Miss Littlefield retired at age 67 on 6/30/48. Although her two adoring students overestimated her age, they were correct in that the state Department of Education had a mandatory retirement age (65) and, therefore, Miss Littlefield did exceed it by two years. For the same reason, President Sprague had to retire in 1951 when he reached age 65.

Carl Mueller was mentioned favorably by two people. Gwen said, “He was a tough man—a good musician.” Moe (white) remembered him as “a marvelous director.” When Moe auditioned for a college singing group, Mr. Mueller “listened to me very carefully and he looked at me and he said kindly, ‘Mr. McGee, I understand you play football; you should play football.’” Bernice, on the other hand, had an unpleasant recollection of Mr. Mueller that will be addressed in the section on racist incidents.

Harry Cayley was “liked very much” by Thelma A, and Ethel M said he opened my mind, I felt, and lots of other students who loved his classes. And occasionally he would dismiss us early for one reason or another and we would groan. We didn’t want to go! . . . He was just a very brilliant professor. . . . On a day like today that’s overcast, he would just put on some beautiful classical music and we would just sit and absorb. It was good. . . . He also was one of the most inspiring in terms of making us think. . . . I’m sure that he started me in thinking more deeply about a lot of things.

Florence referred to an African American custodian, Albert Terry, as “our friend.” She said, “Mr. Terry was a tennis enthusiast himself. He used to help us with our tennis. . . . He was able to get up a basketball team—five men. He brought them down to the YWCA” to play, because there were no adequate facilities at the normal school.

Russell Krauss was one of three Rhodes Scholars in the English Department and “a character” (Juanita). Another Rhodes Scholar, William Hamilton, “was a very serious soul” (Moe – white). The third, James Pettegrove, was named as a top teacher by Juanita, Lillian, and Moe. But Roberta said he was the only one of her professors about whom she “had some suspicion that perhaps he just did not accept me as part of his classroom.” (A fourth Rhodes Scholar on campus at that time, Mowat Fraser of the Integration Department, was not mentioned as a favorite by anyone. In fact, Ethel M held him responsible for a troublesome event that will be described later.)

Walter Freeman garnered high praise from Norma and George, who described him as a “wonderful man, wonderful role model. What a gentleman he was.” For Reuben, “S. Marie Kuhnen is probably one of the most special women that I met at Montclair and even know today . . . very helpful.” Roberta remembered Walter Kops from a course she took with social studies majors even though she was not one. “I got so much out of it because he went into such great detail. . . . I didn’t have to do everything that they had to do, some major papers and research work, but I got the bonus of his teaching.”

In the view of Audrey (white), “the professors did a great deal to make us feel part of a community.” She praised David Davis and Howard Fehr as “men who went on from here to be really nationally recognized people.” And Maude Carter, the dean of women—“even though we thought she was, you know, pompous or whatever—she certainly was training us socially. And then even the president’s wife was just a delight.” She considered Julia Sprague “one of the loveliest persons” and one of her “great friends.” Although Audrey appreciated Maude Carter, she was named by Katherine as the person responsible for two unpleasant racial incidents that will be described later. Margaret Sherwin taught physical education and dance before taking over as dean of women upon the retirement of Mrs. Carter. Miss Sherwin was liked by both Audrey and Vernell, who described her as “a very lovely woman.” Lillian also “had a great relationship” with her and “spent a lot of time in her office getting to know her.”⁹⁰

⁹⁰ Following Miss Sherwin’s death in 1993, Earl Davis (professor emeritus and author of a dissertation on the history of MSTC through 1951) noted in a 4/24/93 letter to the president of Montclair State that “she will long be remembered for her management of student carnivals, the direction of the dorm shows, her organization of the receiving lines at the dances, and her vigilance concerning proper attire for commencement. Dean Sherwin’s rapport with students was most commendable.”

Florence and Katherine, two of the three students in the earliest years of this study, mentioned a beloved mathematics teacher, “the famous Daddy Stone!”⁹¹ Frances, Vernell, and Audrey (white) enjoyed the classes of Paul Clifford. Vernell said that when he was reading Chaucer, “it was very exciting!” Two subjects remembered Frederick Young as “good” (Lillian) and “just so bubbly and so pleasant” (Roberta). Vernell said with regard to Roy Hatch, “We all liked him and we talked about him a great deal.” For Jeannette, Seymour Fersh “was very sympathetic.” Marilyn remembered Eugene Link:

We were uptight with him at first because we thought oh, here’s this southern guy. Anyway, he was a very alert person, very astute, and he caught on very quickly and said, “Now, I am a southerner.” He said, “I can’t help that. But I am not a racist.” Racist wasn’t being used at that time—whatever term that implied racism. “And I want you to know that I am a humanist first and we’re all people together.” That sort of relaxed us all. We all had a good time with him.

In fact, Marilyn and other students were guests of Dr. Link at a social event in his home.

Thelma A remembered E. DeAlton Partridge as a psychology professor. “I liked him a lot and I enjoyed his class.” Joyce and Reuben knew him as President Partridge, a very tall man who was integral to the student activities during camping weekends. He called square dances and cooked “buffalo steaks” in “a pit on the ground.” Reuben

⁹¹ Grace Layer Shorter ’16 (white) thought the famous mathematician was marvelous, but looked like an “unmade bed” (telephone conversation on 8/8/97). In a subsequent written memoir, she recalled: “The students adored Dr. Stone; classrooms were happy places and math could be fun. Never a good student in ‘arithmetic,’ Dr. Stone made math a living thing for me.” Grace Flitcroft Quinn ’22 (white) also recalled that “Daddy Stone especially was excellent” (telephone conversation on 12/16/97). Her class asked him to write some “observations” for the yearbook. He began: “It is a much harder task than I have ever assigned you, and I hope that you will be as generous in grading it as I have been with some of you. For as a father excuseth the shortcomings of his children, so have I excused some of you who were born short in mathematics” (11).

watched him “throw these steaks on top of all these charcoals and everybody’s around, sort of like Neanderthal man, eating steaks!”⁹²

For Katherine:

My pet teacher, my mentor and the teacher to whom I owe everything, is Miss Margaret Holz, the head of the foreign language teachers. She had confidence in me. I was in awe of her because she was very strict. . . . Miss Holz! Oh, yes. She was interested in *realia*. And that’s why when I became a teacher in the high schools here in Newark, I wasn’t interested only in the language. I was interested in teaching the culture, the dances, the art, everything pertaining to French.

Miss Holz selected Katherine as one of the students who would spend a year studying in France, where “we all went to small provincial schools because Miss Holz did not want us to go to Paris where you would hear English! . . . It was a marvelous idea!”⁹³

Katherine recalled that Miss Holz had raised most of the funds for the students who went abroad, and the parents contributed a smaller portion. Miss Holz later arranged for Katherine’s teaching position at Spelman College.

Lillian remembered that Philip Cohen “was much beloved; everybody really enjoyed him.” Ethel B also found that with Dr. Cohen, she developed an “equal” type of mentorship. “He always used to try to test me to see how much I knew about the civil

⁹² Partridge’s predecessor, President Sprague, apparently was a less hardy camper. He visited a group of normal school students who were on a weekend nature study trip and, bothered by insects, placed a butterfly net over his head. The students were amused at the new look sported by their formal and distinguished leader (telephone conversation on 5/6/98 with Kathleen O’Brien Kimble ’27). William Van Tuinen ’41, MA ’49, compared the two presidents. Sprague was dignified and scholarly, respected by everyone, and admired for developing the curriculum. He would not make the first move in getting to know students, but was approachable if students wished to discuss something with him. Regarding Partridge, he said: “As for dignity—he threw it out the window! The students developed him from a Boy Scout into a president.” He was very outgoing and known for the new buildings constructed under his leadership (conversation on 4/30/94).

⁹³ Similarly, when Gwen spent a summer in Mexico, she shared a room with the daughter of a Spanish family. “That was the best thing that ever happened because that daughter knew no English. We would lie there till one and 2:00 in the morning and speak in Spanish, and she would correct any mistakes I made when I was speaking Spanish, to the point where when it was time to leave at the end of the summer, I had some young people on the beach . . . ask me what state in Mexico I was from.”

rights. You know, CORE and SNCC and what have you. And then when I threw it back at him, he seemed very impressed with that.”⁹⁴

Three subjects mentioned Edgar Bye, who “taught a course in the levels of living that was just remarkable” (Vernell). She explained that students took trips into New York City and visited the

Salvation Army . . . a slum . . . black bourgeois house with a black woman in Harlem with four or five Filipino houseboys . . . homes for the aging, homes for children who were so malformed . . . prisons . . . this gave me a kind of vision of a different world.

Bernice also was impressed with the field trips and Thelma C said, “You know, that was a course, but it was also a wonderful experience. . . . We went to all the institutions that impact our lives.” She attributed much of the success of the class to Dr. Bye’s personal enthusiasm.⁹⁵

White students may have viewed the sites with a different perspective. A *Montclarion* report of one such trip described a visit to Father Divine’s Rockland Palace, where students had a “psychological reaction” to the music and environment. They joined in the marching, clapping, shouting, and dancing and returned home making comments such as “ain’ dat da truth” and “dat’s truly wonderful. . . . Naturally, the trip had its serious side. . . . Better times for the Negro were stressed” (2/27/42).

Jeannette respected Alice Stewart for advising the Citizenship Committee, a very active social service group. Miss Stewart “would have us over to her home many times.”⁹⁶ Jeannette also lauded Dr. Clayton for being “willing to help me with this

⁹⁴ Philip Cohen later became dean of the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at MSC.

⁹⁵ A similar course had been offered before Dr. Bye arrived. In 1929, the *Pelican* reported on visits by the advanced psychology class to homes for juvenile offenders in New Jersey. At one home, students were struck by “a noticeably large Negro element” (11/14/29).

⁹⁶ Miss Stewart is the person Bernice had to educate regarding her manner of calling on black students. See earlier section on “Feelings in the Classroom.”

NAACP” (establishing a campus chapter). He “was a white professor here, and he took an interest in trying to help me pull it off. And as I get older I really appreciate the fact that he was really putting himself out on a limb in a way that I was too naïve to even worry about at the time.”

Vernell described John Rellahan as “probably the sweetest, nicest guy I ever knew as a professor, and he opened the whole world of economics for me.” He made the subject exciting and “taught it so beautifully I was able to go back to my papers . . . when I started teaching economics.” Yet Matthew was not impressed with Dr. Rellahan due to the lack of a personal connection. “It was come in every day and it was lecture. He left and I left. Didn’t really get to know the person.” On the other hand, he liked Miss Stewart “simply because she was friendly. . . . She was a human being.”

Felix Wittmer elicited strong feelings on both ends of the emotional spectrum. He sometimes held class meetings at his home (*Montclarion* 3/27/42). Thelma A thought he was “okay” and Gwen absolutely raved that his course in Civilization and Citizenship “was a favorite.”

I think I learned more from that man than I learned from anybody in my whole life. . . . I copied down everything that came out of his mouth! . . . Some people hated him, but I loved him . . . because he pushed so much. . . . I was willing to give anything he wanted because I just thought I learned so much and liked him so much.

But George felt much differently about him. In Civilization and Citizenship, “no matter what he started out teaching, he always ended up talking about the treatment of the Jews by the Nazis. . . . I didn’t do well and I had to take it over.” Moe (white) noted that Dr. Wittmer was one of the professors who possibly graded black students unfairly. He

was from Germany and he didn't like anybody.⁹⁷ He swore up and down before a group of veterans that he had done more during the war and for the war effort than anybody in the room! And one kid stuck up his—well, what was left of his one hand, and he said, “Are you sure, Dr. Wittmer?”

In fact, Dr. Clayton and Miss Stewart, who had been praised by Jeannette for their social awareness, “were both very liberal folk⁹⁸ and the Felix Wittmer I mentioned earlier reported them to the House Un-American Activities Committee.” When World War II ended in Europe, the *Montclarion* (5/11/45) solicited reactions and Dr. Wittmer advised: “Let's think of the job that's yet to be done in Japan!”⁹⁹ The *Montclarion* had teased Dr. Wittmer rather maliciously on February 12, 1942:

How many Valentines will Dr. Wittmer get tomorrow? On a recent poll taken in the phone booth the speculations are as follows: 149½ voted “none.” 2 guys voted “2 comic valentines.” 5 girls who want their marks changed voted “5 very sweet valentines.”¹⁰⁰

Gwen recalled Otis Ingebritsen as “a nice Swedish man with white hair.” To Joyce he “was the most elegant looking man” but “a terrible teacher. . . . I didn't like Ingebritsen.” She considered why she did not transfer to another professor's class and concluded: “I wouldn't have had the sophistication to change, actually. There were a lot of things I didn't know I could do in those days.” However, Gwen and Joyce were agreed in negatively evaluating a science professor who conducted field trips to the Museum of Natural History in New York. Upon returning to Montclair, they were required to answer questions about the experience. Joyce cited as an example:

⁹⁷ Earl Davis, who was personnel director and held other positions at MSTC, agreed with this assessment of Dr. Wittmer (telephone conversation on 1/22/00).

⁹⁸ In 1947, Harold A. Lett from the state Department of Education, Division Against Discrimination, “an outstanding leader among the Negro race,” spoke to Dr. Clayton's and Miss Stewart's classes (*Montclarion* 3/7/47).

⁹⁹ Dr. Link, on the other hand, said: “If America faces her responsibility not only in overcoming the Japanese, but also in reconstructing a war-torn and hungry Europe, we can't be too jubilant on V-E Day. Be of good cheer but keep your head.”

¹⁰⁰ At least one of his female students felt fondly toward him and married him, “but the marriage was a short one” (Partridge 1983 40).

“How many bacteria are in teeth?” And we’d try to give an intelligent answer, and her answer was, “Oh, ever so many!” Or she’d give you these little strips of faded paper and you were supposed to find information in the museum based on that question, and you could hardly read it. So, it was like she did everything 100 years ago and was still using the same material.

Gwen remembered another question: “What was to the right of the elevator as you came out on such-and-such a floor?” And the answer was “a pot of palms or some silly thing. She just wanted to see how observant we were.” Ironically, neither of them could remember her name.

Katherine believed that Edna McEachern, a music teacher, “was very fond of me.” Vernell said she “was so marvelous and crazy. I just enjoyed her. . . . She made fun of us . . . very nice, very interesting. And I adored her.” But Ethel M, while acknowledging that Dr. McEachern was “very outstanding,” had “the feeling that she somehow wasn’t thrilled that I was in her class, but it’s not anything I could put my finger on. It was just a feeling.” Gwen could not remember the name of the music teacher (presumably it was Dr. McEachern), but did know “something happened” in her class that was not pleasant. A subject who preferred to remain anonymous with regard to an incident concerning Dr. McEachern reported that she was interviewed by the professor when she wished to minor in music. Dr. McEachern gave her the “fish eye” and she was not admitted to the program—due, she suspected, to the teacher’s prejudice. And Bernice remarked that an African American music major who eventually dropped out of school told her that Dr. McEachern “didn’t want me here anyway; she doesn’t even want me.”

Gwen complained that Benjamin Karp, the art teacher, “was horrible.” But Ethel M enjoyed his course. Two interviewees appreciated classes with Irene Pennington, “that cute lady” (Bernice) who was an outstanding teacher and made things very real in the classroom by bringing up social issues (Patricia). But for Lillian, “Irene

Pennington was not a favorite of mine, bless her soul. She probably did the best she could. . . . She seemed to always be more interested in the older students.”¹⁰¹

Some special faculty and staff members were remembered as outstanding without their admirers mentioning specifics. These included William Ballare, Zaidee Brown, Charles Finley, Howard Fox, Marie Frazee (a subject in this study), Edward Fulcomer, Charles Hadley, Claude Jackson, Ellen Kauffman, Virgil Mallory, Paul Nickerson, Filomena Peloro, Rufus Reed, Arthur Seybold, Kenneth Smith, W. Harry Snyder, President Harry Sprague, and John Warriner. Howard felt close to three faculty members in the Physical Education Department: Alden Coder, William Dioguardi, and Richard Willing. Other faculty who were simply mentioned without evaluation were Winifred Crawford, Foster Grossnickle, Louise Humphrey, Ella Hunting, Fallie McKinley, Mary McKinney, and Elizabeth Van Derveer (“a very prim and proper lady” according to Gwen).

Vernell named five men and three women among her favorite professors and observed with regard to the former: “Superficially I think I may have been enamored of them because they were men. I had only had one male teacher (in the seventh grade), and with all the boys going off” to war, it was pleasant to have at least some males on campus. Gwen said, “My teachers at Montclair were excellent” and Marie recalled, “They were just such wonderful teachers.” Juanita attributed the superiority of her classes to

the way in which they were taught. I was very fortunate to have excellent teachers. . . . I’ve been in education a long time and I look back upon the quality

¹⁰¹ Given Lillian’s belief about Miss Pennington, it is curious that she was one of two professors interested in working with seventh and eighth graders from College High School on a special citizenship project in 1952 (Davis 151). On the other hand, her experience with them may have been the very cause of a subsequent inclination toward older students.

of the people that taught up at Montclair State and I just marvel at it. . . . I don't think I had any really bad teachers.

Yet a few interviewees did experience poor teaching. Joyce summed up the reason certain professors remained in their memories. "My old high school principal said you remember the good ones and the bad ones."

Discussion of Social Issues

Among the 16 respondents to the question of whether or not students discussed social issues of the day either inside or outside the classroom, 10 said yes and six said no. Although more affirmative answers were expected from subjects who graduated in the later years of this study, there was no such pattern. Respondents in both categories spanned the entire three-decade period. Where such discussions were held in nonclass settings, they often involved Jewish and Italian students talking with the African Americans.

On the "yes" side, Norma '33 said that such discussions were held "and every time they brought up the 'Negro problem,' I felt a little uneasy." When asked if she participated in the talks herself, she said, "Yes, yes, yes." Katherine '34 at first said social matters were not discussed, but then reflected: "We may have been talking about the Depression . . . [and] some of the students wanted me to join their group that was a little bit Communist-inspired, but I wasn't interested in that." When asked if there was any political activism on campus, she said: "Yes, oh, yes. Perhaps among the Newark students. I don't think it was with the students who were in the dormitory."

Marilyn '46 remembered such discussions "among my [black] friends, yes." They talked about "segregation in general" and the fact that "the black men were fighting and coming back and being killed, in the South especially. You know, we still had the

lynching and all that kind of horrible stuff going on down there. . . . Race relations was a very big subject definitely.” Much of the talk occurred in the recreation room among the members of “the smoke-filled bridge-playing group.” A few white students “used to sit in on our sessions,” she said—“especially, I think, the Jewish students for one thing and some of the Italian girls also.”

Marilyn and Thelma A ’44 both enrolled in a course titled “Racial Contributions to American Life,” where some discussions may have been generated. Marilyn said:

We talked about racism and race relations—not only that, human relations, I would say, in general—in his class. And that’s one reason I think I really was interested in social studies and history . . . the theme of human relations along the centuries.

Thelma A did not mention that course specifically, but she was quoted in the *Montclarion* giving her views on another issue, the miners’ strike (6/9/43).

Ethel M ’48 said there was “not a lot” of discussion about important social and political issues except in an “interesting little group of us [who] became friends.” Like Marilyn, she mentioned that they “were quite a mixture. One was a Jewish girl and one was an Italian American, and another one was German American.” Even when she was subjected to an offensive racial incident that will be described later, Ethel M “didn’t feel any particular support in letting this be known to anybody else. I’m sure I told a few people here—my little circle of friends here. And I was very angry.” Yet she understood that “everything has to be put in its time frame, and at that time” such discussions were not common. Nevertheless, George ’49 did recall that on the *Montclarion* staff:

We were kind of political, and we got in some hot water a couple of times. We got into some hot water about an article we wrote about the DAR, and the administration was very unhappy with us. . . . I think it was DAR attitudes toward racial—and we were sort of called on the carpet for it. But we didn’t back down, I remember. And I’ll say something about the administration. We didn’t back down and they did not harass us.

Two more years made a difference, and Juanita ’51 answered, “Oh, yes.”

We talked about race relations. . . . We talked about all kinds of social things. One of my very best friends at college . . . was Jewish . . . and her parents had escaped from Germany prior to . . . the war there. . . . Our group was very interested in social things. So we had the International Relations Club we belonged to and the Group, the Human Relations Group. So we talked about social issues and relationships between people and countries and things like that.

The end of World War II also influenced discussions, continued Juanita.

We went to college right at the end of the war, and there were many veterans in the class—I think that had a lot to do with raising the social consciousness. And we also went to college at a time when the races were trying to get along together. . . . My college days predated all of that polarization which has since occurred in our society. . . . We were not polarized; we were friends.

Thelma C '53 also remembered that “sometimes in International Relations, in the clubs, you know, you might do some of that. Remember, we were young and after class, we were on to frivolity.”

Patricia '56 praised Miss Pennington for making “things very real in the classroom by bringing up social issues.” She also said that Dr. Runyon “would sometimes talk about the racial issue and how things would change and whatnot. The Supreme Court decision came through at that time for a slow, gradual need to change.” She recalled “lots of discussions” in the classroom after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision by the Supreme Court that outlawed segregation in the public schools. In the residence halls, there was “nothing that made me feel uncomfortable, but things were discussed. . . . People made their comments and, you know, we kept going.” With regard to *Brown*, her classmate Howard '56 remembered that “in the social studies classes, there was some mention of it—purely academic.”

Ethel B '57 stated that “the only one who used to ask me things or try to perk me into talking about things was Dr. Cohen. But as far as bringing it into the classrooms, I don't think any of it was brought into the classrooms.” Nevertheless, “whenever I gave

my reports, I always gave it on black history and black studies, so that always perked an interest among the students, but they never asked questions about it.”¹⁰²

Six participants were emphatic in saying important social issues were not discussed seriously by students anywhere on campus. Florence ’28 observed that in integrated schools “you didn’t hear what really went on among black people.” Marie ’43 (white) said, “I have never recalled discussing it from the point of view of black and white in the old days.” Roberta ’57 said, “I don’t remember getting into anything too heavy—you know, outside of the classroom. I remember light conversation and having lots of fun.” When asked specifically if there was any discussion of the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, she responded: “I have no memory of it whatsoever. I don’t even know if I knew it was happening.”

Lillian ’57 was aware that “Rosa Parks did the sit-in while I was there. I must have been a sophomore. Or the Montgomery boycott which we did know about. We knew about these things, but I don’t remember it galvanizing us.” When pressed about whether discussions were held on campus among the students about major issues, she said:

No. Now, Pat and I could have said something about it to each other in the context of conversation. . . . But there wouldn’t be, that I know of, a political arena where we’d be sitting around saying, “Let’s get together and talk about the implications” and that sort of thing. . . . That period that I was in school, there wasn’t a lot of social upheaval going on. People weren’t feeling compelled. That was “Father Knows Best” time, I think. . . . I don’t remember crises or things that jolted us in the night.

¹⁰² The caption under the yearbook photograph of Ruth Earley ’35 says: “Ruth gives the most interesting reports we’ve ever heard—every time she is scheduled to speak, we’re sure to be in class.” She was the only black student in her class and perhaps her reports, too, dealt with racial issues that aroused the interest of her peers.

She noted that in addition to the nondiscussion of racial matters, “there was nobody rallying for women’s issues” either.

Reuben ’59 said that social topics were raised in some of his classes. When asked if there were opportunities in those classes to express his own views or to bring up contemporary issues such as the Little Rock situation, he said that MSTC “was basically an all-white situation; I didn’t think that they wanted to hear me talk about if it was unfair or not.” He acknowledged that part of his hesitance to speak was a subconscious acquiescence to his mother’s admonition: “Don’t make any waves, don’t draw attention, don’t create a problem, you know, don’t be loud, don’t—especially amongst white American males. So that caution was always there.”

Jeannette ’59 said that issues such as Little Rock and the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision “were not discussed to my knowledge in the classroom. . . . On campus, I don’t remember any talk about it at all.”

Interaction with Faculty and Staff

There was a rough division between commuters and residents in the amount of interaction they perceived between students and faculty or staff. Because the commuters had to catch public transportation back home, they did not have as much freedom as residents to mingle on campus after classes. Naturally enough, most of the interaction that did occur was with faculty who served as advisors to clubs in which the students were members. There was also a sense that the faculty in certain departments (Speech, Science, and Foreign Languages) were more personal than others. Professors who invited students to their homes were appreciated by both residents and commuters.

Nine interviewees denied having significant interaction with faculty and staff outside the classroom. These included two residents, Joyce and Juanita, who were

exceptions to the rule suggested above. Joyce said, “I personally never had any particular interaction with faculty members” and Juanita responded, “Oh, hardly ever.” Ethel M had “very little recollection of much interaction.” She added: “I don’t really remember, you know, socializing or having a cup of coffee or tea or doing anything with professors.” Gwen claimed, “I didn’t interact with anybody.” When asked if faculty members would have been in the lounge talking to students, she replied, “If they were, I wasn’t there.” Similarly, Vernell responded, “No, not in those days.”

Some people specifically attributed the lack of interaction to their commuter status. Gerry said, “I was a commuter so I saw no after class interaction.” Katherine acknowledged: “I’m sure that there was a lot of that, but I’m not aware of it because . . . for the first two years, I was a ‘day-hop.’” For Frances at College High School, it was more a matter of the faculty members leaving than the pupils departing for the day. “I never really got very close to any of my teachers, because, as I say, when they left the classroom, that was the end of it.” The teachers, of course, had to attend to their college students and other professorial responsibilities.

When asked if faculty members ever invited students to their homes, Ethel M responded: “Not then.” Juanita said, “Oh, no, no.” Vernell recalled that “nobody ever invited you to the house, although they may have invited kids who lived in the dormitory to the house. But I never felt that they didn’t want us there.” Rather, expectations were very different from what happened “with the ’60s.” Yet, a number of interviewees *were* invited to faculty homes (see below).

Ethel B noted that there was no interaction with President Partridge “except I think for baccalaureate and graduation.” She added:

I don’t recall my personally interacting as an undergraduate other than conferences with my professors. . . . But on a social level, no. When I went to

graduate school there, there was more interaction on a social level, but not as an undergraduate.

However, “in the field of foreign languages, I believe there was more interaction between the students and the professors.” Although no one else mentioned the Foreign Language Department, some of the 19 participants who remembered at least a bit of interaction confirmed Ethel B’s observation that certain departments fostered more contact between faculty and students than did others. Curiously, the department mentioned most often was Social Studies—in which Ethel B was a major!

Matthew, another social studies major, recalled that students used to visit Dr. Fincher at his home and that Miss Stewart invited them to her home about four times during the semester. “That made her stand out in my mind as a different kind of teacher than the others that I had.” Thelma C thought there was one occasion when “Dr. Fincher had a picnic for us on his farm” and the social studies majors “were all there.” Howard also recalled Social Studies Department picnics. “But for me, remember I was working on a very limited schedule. I had to schedule all my outside activities around trying to work and participate in athletics.” Marilyn believed that a social studies professor “may have invited a group of us to his house for a picnic or something. . . . That’s the only occasion that pops up into my head right now.” In general, she did not remember any interaction outside the classroom. “It may have taken place but I don’t recall.” Social studies major Bernice remembered frequent talks with the dean of women, Miss Sherwin, but “not a lot” of interaction within her department. “I can only speak for my department. We didn’t do a lot of things with the faculty.” However, she thought there was such interaction in other departments. Clearly there were one or two faculty members in the Social Studies Department who invited students to their homes, but perhaps that was the extent of interaction.

The Music Department and Foreign Languages Department struck some subjects as quite cohesive, although the reports could not be verified because no majors in those departments mentioned any special interaction with the professors. Three science majors, however, did refer to positive associations with faculty members outside of class.

Reuben stated: “In the Science Department, of course, we were more collegial in my opinion. We were more collegial; there were parties, professors—you could go sit down with them and have coffee. . . . So I never felt that I was out of place or being left out.”

He added: “I would think that probably most departments had some kind of a set-up where the students could meet the teachers informally.” Another science major, Irv (white), said that “faculty were active participants in college extracurricular activities.” He remembered having dinner at Dr. Reed’s home “often when staying for night meetings,” and maintained that “student-faculty interaction both in classes and outside of classes . . . created a family-like atmosphere that was important to the commuting student” such as himself. Alma knew that her husband, Tom, felt very close to his science professors, although she could not elaborate on his out-of-class interactions.

The two mathematics majors had strikingly different experiences. Gerry remembered no interaction after class due to her commuter status. Yet Audrey (white), a resident, said that faculty and staff members “always, always” stopped to chat on campus and students were “entertained in their homes because many of them lived in Upper Montclair.” Even during her first year when she commuted, it was “very congenial. . . . I felt as if I had been taken into a community and welcomed so.” In addition, as vice president of the sophomore class, she served as social chair.

And dear Julia [Sprague] and Maude Carter, who was the dean of [women] . . . would take us and show us how to get a receiving line ready for the proms, and who should stand, and what the protocol was. So I learned a lot socially from these women. They were very much in everything.

Among the remaining subjects who affirmed the existence of interaction with faculty outside the classroom, several remembered only one such episode. Roberta was in the home of a sorority sponsor for some events, “but other than that I don’t remember any social action specifically with faculty members.” Thelma A recalled very little interaction “pertaining to me, personally—except the one incident in Dr. Bohn’s home for a club meeting.” Florence also remembered just one gathering at the home of Miss Crawford, who “had the girls come over to her house in East Orange one Saturday for a party. It was lovely. I had a good time.” However, regarding opportunities on campus to interact informally with teachers, she said: “No, I can’t say that I remember.”

The only interaction Marie (white) recalled was during club meetings. “Each club would have a faculty advisor, yes. That would be your out-of-class contact with faculty.” George agreed that the after-class activities provided occasions for interaction with the faculty and staff. For him, it amounted to a considerable amount of time because “I was into everything.”

Some interviewees in addition to Audrey (white)—quoted above—were very positive in their responses. Norma said that professors “took such great interest in their students and spent time, not only in the classroom but before and after.” Patricia remembered “a great deal” of interaction outside class and an occasional visit to a faculty home. When Moe (white) was asked if students engaged in conversations with faculty members outside of the class, he replied: “Oh, of course!” He cited as an example Dr. Gage, who would “stop in the middle of the hall and talk to three or four students just on general principles.” Dr. Mallory “was exactly the same way. He was a friend with everybody.” When asked if he thought African American students had the same kind of interactions outside the classroom, he responded: “I would not be surprised. As I said, the bias, if there was any, it wasn’t very evident.”

Lillian offered several examples of interaction with faculty and staff. Sometimes she was asked to join in activities while working in the Speech Department office. She had been to President Partridge's home for receptions and other events and "had a great relationship with the dean of women, Dean Sherwin. I spent a lot of time in her office getting to know her." When her class was required to see a play in New York, the professor, Howard Fox, invited Lillian to accompany him because he realized her finances were limited. "He was very congenial. But Dr. Bohn came with us, which I didn't know was going to happen! And I thought there is no way I could have a conversation or know what they're going to talk about. But they were very convivial." Lillian also had the opportunity to observe Miss Herberman conducting speech therapy in New York when the professor offered to give her a ride each time she drove into the city. "She just asked me if I wanted to do it. . . . I was never not included."

When asked if students would meet with faculty members in a lounge or in the amphitheater simply to chat, Jeannette replied: "Surely I would not." She acknowledged that, "of course, if you worked in the office or the library or somewhere, you got to know the prof." Dr. Clayton worked very closely with Jeannette in trying to establish a campus chapter of the NAACP. Also, Miss Stewart, who sponsored a student club, "would have us over to her home many times. She lived in Little Falls." Although Jeannette did not recall any negative interactions, she

didn't have *any* interaction with some of them and that might be a problem today. But remember, in those days you went to school; the teacher taught; you learned. . . . You didn't look for all this personal, individualized attention, and I don't think they as pros felt obligated to give it to you.

She concluded that a concern for such mingling is "kind of modern."

Practice Teaching

All participants except Frances, the College High School pupil, experienced practice teaching, and some had both high school and elementary assignments. The vast majority of the 33 cooperating teachers in the schools were white; only four were black. The pupil populations had more variety. The four schools in which the cooperating teachers were black also housed all black children. There were 14 schools with all white children and 15 with children of both races. Each of the four white subjects practiced in an all-white school. The four subjects who were in all-black schools were African American—three in elementary schools and one in a high school.

Five subjects reported a positive practice teaching experience. Three had an unpleasant encounter and for three it was a mixed undertaking. The remaining 16 subjects merely reported on the basic facts of their assignments without classifying them one way or the other. Only one of the 27 respondents had a racial problem connected with practice teaching. For most, the experience simply fulfilled its purpose in providing an opportunity to test their skills and prepare for their careers.

On the positive side were Joyce, George, Lillian, Ethel B, and Jeannette. Joyce said her practice teaching, with white faculty members and mostly white pupils, “was a wonderful experience. There were all male social studies teachers and I was treated very well.” Lillian testified that although there were no black faculty members in the school, her cooperating teacher “couldn’t have been more gracious and eager to have me and to work with me.” One of Ethel B’s experiences was in a mixed high school. She said, “I believe that I was the first black practice teacher . . . I know they didn’t have many before me.” In her elementary practice in a white school, the cooperating teacher “seemed to just like the idea that I was there. She let me do anything I wanted to do.” Likewise,

Jeannette's supervisor "was white, very supportive, let me do anything I wanted to do."

George mentioned that in a course back on campus following practice teaching,

everyone was talking about—and the teacher emphasized—the problems they had in student teaching. . . . It was a constant negative thing, and I couldn't contribute to it. I practice taught in my old high school with my favorite English teacher and my favorite Latin teacher, and I loved it. I never had any problems.

Those who reported a decidedly negative experience were Marilyn, Vernell, and Matthew. Marilyn worked at her high school alma mater and said: "I absolutely hated it. . . . I had absolutely no sense of how to keep control with them at first. . . . I knew my subject, but I didn't know how to give it to them." Vernell returned to her hometown as well, but practiced in a different junior high school than the one she had attended. "It was a stressful period, because first of all, I was teaching in a section of town which had very many immigrant people," she said. "We were on the border, so I had gone to a junior high school in a more affluent neighborhood than my own." She believed her college supervisor

wanted me to be in the school where the need was greater and where I would learn a great deal. But I learned one thing and that is that I would never teach seventh grade or eighth grade. . . . I eventually found that my niche as a teacher on the secondary level was with tenth graders.

Matthew also practice taught in his own high school "and hated it. Well, I think I was too near the students' age and, of course, I knew them all." Ethel B, like Matthew, knew many of the pupils with whom she was practice teaching, but her feeling about the situation was different: "The same parties and dances that I was going to, my students would come to them and they had to call me Miss Blake! And to this day they still call me Miss Blake and some of them look as old as I do."

Three people reported mixed experiences. Howard taught both elementary and high school classes in his hometown. The black cooperating teacher on the elementary level was "an outstanding teacher. In the high school—God, I've forgotten whom I

worked with. That tells you what I think of that experience.” Gwen’s first practice was at a very small high school.

I had this terrible little lady who was getting her master’s at NYU, and she would make me read all of her novels and all of her everything and do the reports for her, while I was trying to prepare my Spanish lessons and all that, because I had Spanish III, II and I—I had all the classes. I would come home at night and cry. It was terrible, student teaching.

On the other hand, “elementary went very well.”

Ethel M had a uniquely devastating experience. On a particular day, all prospective practice teachers were scheduled to visit the schools where they would teach. That very morning, Ethel M received a call from Dean Mowat Fraser instructing her to go to the college instead of to the practice school,

which totally puzzled me. I couldn’t imagine what was happening. Well, when I got here, [the dean] told me he decided that he should let them know that I was a Negro, and that was the end of teaching in West Orange at the time. They no longer wanted me there. . . . Another school was found for me in Orange. It wasn’t a place I particularly wanted to go.

Fortunately, the story had a happy ending.

I was very much lacking in confidence in myself. I followed three really outstanding brothers in high school. . . . A few things, I think, changed that, and one was practice teaching. And being successful at that kind of gave me a boost and I realized, “I can do it!” . . . The teacher and I became friends. . . . I wound up loving the kids and the school.¹⁰³

The interviewees who did not categorize their practice teaching as being either positive or negative offered other interesting comments on their experiences. In a post-interview conversation, Florence described a weekly occurrence at Glenfield School in Montclair, where she practice taught and had been a pupil for one year herself. There was a “park house” for athletic events, and it contained a bathtub—a luxury many of the

¹⁰³ Dr. Fraser also was Bernice’s supervisor for practice teaching. She said that when it was time to seek a permanent position, he told her: “You better look elsewhere, you better look in the big cities. . . . I can’t find anything for you.”

pupils did not have at home. Once a week, a woman would take from the class any boys (never girls) who wanted a bath, and they returned from the park house clean and happy.

When Katherine was asked if there were any black teachers in the school where she practiced, she replied: “Well, I don’t think it was known at the time.” She was alluding to the fact that many African Americans “passed” for white and she would not unveil their secret. She was similarly circumspect in answering the question regarding her MSTC classmates, as will be seen.

Ethel B recounted two incidents from her high school and elementary practice teaching days. In the high school class:

We were doing the Civil War, so I read this book about Abraham Lincoln and maybe he wasn’t, you know, the paramount of virtue that we always said he was. So I put the question to my students and made them do research on it. . . . And my cooperating teacher really didn’t like it, but again, he didn’t hinder me in any way and my students really enjoyed it because, you know, I made them think, well, what were his motives.

And in the elementary class, there was a boy who wasn’t “doing what his other teachers were telling him because he had this superior attitude about him.” He told Ethel B “the only Negroes he knew were the ones who came to clean his mother’s house. I said, ‘Well, here’s one Negro who’s not coming to clean your mother’s house!’ . . . And I think that kind of shocked him and he fell in line and did his work.”

Three interviewees professed not to have taken notice of the races of their pupils. Joyce said:

I don’t think I would have been aware of it particularly, because I was so focused in on trying to do a good job that—strangely, when I think back . . . I wouldn’t have noticed particularly. That was not a period of time that was particularly unfriendly.

Gerry stated: “I didn’t notice the races of the students. At the time it didn’t make a difference. . . . There was enough of a mix that no one stood out.” Marilyn reflected that “as far as what their background, ethnic background may have been, we didn’t pay much

attention to it—not that I can recall, anyway.” Similarly, but in another context, Audrey (white) said she could not think of racial distinctions. “But I might not have noticed. . . . I can’t tell you usually, if it’s a student of mine, if it was an African American student.”

Respondents had different recollections about how they obtained practice teaching assignments. Alma believed that the colleges located the sites. She and her future husband, Tom, both were placed in their hometown of Newark. Jeannette likewise taught in her hometown of Jersey City and did not request the site. “I was assigned.” Thelma A wished to work locally, but ended up in a black school in Trenton and boarded with the school’s clerk. Although she said Montclair officials had located the site, she did not “think it had any racial intonations.” It was simply that the number of students requiring positions in English classes made it impossible to place them all locally. As proof, she noted that another African American student whose major was Spanish had been placed nearby. And, as an aside, she reported that the college supervising professor “didn’t give me a good observation and I don’t know why.”¹⁰⁴

Other students, including George, maintained that they “could choose and then the school had to say whether they would take you or not.” When Reuben was asked if he or other African American students had been steered toward or away from certain schools, he said no. “I think you just decided where you wanted to go and you gave them your list of places that you wanted to go to, and they would try to get your first, second, and third choice. . . . I forget the process, but it didn’t seem to be very rigid.” Lillian’s memory was similar. “We had to make it known to our advisor which places we were looking at, where we knew we could get to.”

¹⁰⁴ Yet in another part of the interview, she said that because she could not “find a place anywhere locally to do my student teaching, . . . I didn’t think I was going to get anything [a permanent teaching job] in New Jersey and nothing did open up for me.”

Bernice agreed that students were permitted to select their own practice teaching site, “and most people went home.” Patricia found her assignment by contacting the superintendent in her hometown, Boonton. Norma selected a site because she thought she “might possibly get a job or some help or some idea if I went to Jersey City,” where there were some black teachers in the system. “My mother and father had some dear friends who lived in Jersey City and I lived with them.” The hope was unfulfilled, as a job was not offered upon graduation.

Involvement in Extracurricular Activities

Many interviewees were involved in numerous official extracurricular activities. Sixteen people had high involvement (defined as six or more activities), seven were mid-range (three to five), and five were low (zero to two).

The organizations in which subjects busied themselves spanned the spectrum of possibilities. They included sports of all types, publications, discipline-specific groups, honorary Greek organizations and strictly social ones, student government, and clubs devoted to themes such as drama, music, dance, literature, religion, politics, human relations, and service. Students of both races served as class officers and student government leaders. For commuters especially, these groups were central to their feelings of integration in campus life.

The only African American who expressed the need or desire for a separate organization geared toward black students was Jeannette, who actually was on campus just following the years specifically under study. The others simply may have recognized that critical mass was lacking to sustain such an association. However, one person did concede the difficulty of being a minority in almost all activities.

The 16 highly involved people (numbers in parentheses indicate the number of official extracurricular activities) were Juanita (12), Joyce (11), Moe (10), Frances (9), Lillian (8), Vernell (8), Bernice (8), George (8), Ethel M (8), Audrey (8), Patricia (8), Gwen (7), Gerry (6), Katherine (6), Tom (6), and Irv (6). Joyce, a resident student, noted that membership in the social sororities was based on personality type or interest. The one to which she belonged “was much more down to earth kind of people.” A highlight for her was participation in the television workshop. But her “big thing” among a great variety of interests was Players (the drama club). “Mostly I was in props and I enjoyed that. But one time I was on stage and that was for a senior in speech who had to do a play. . . . I couldn’t act at all. I was nervous. I was scared. I was terrible.”

Katherine and Gwen were especially active in foreign language events and each spent some time studying in another country—Katherine in France for an entire year and Gwen in Mexico for a summer.¹⁰⁵ Both were essentially commuters, although they lived on campus for one semester each. The yearbook staff credited Katherine with being largely responsible for the success of the Basque Festival. Gwen was involved with many campus groups and said that “if you wanted to join, you joined, but there weren’t that many . . . black students” to become members of any particular organization.

Tom played and managed football, but really shone as a track star. In fact, he was expected to be in the 1940 Olympics if the games had not been cancelled because of the war in Europe.¹⁰⁶ His diverse interests extended also to debating, writing for the *Montclarion*, and working with the Science Club. (His wife, Alma, was at Newark State

¹⁰⁵ George was certain that his African American friend Theresa David loved Montclair “because she was also one of the students who was selected to study in Mexico for a year.”

¹⁰⁶ Alma remembered that newspapers would write about her future husband using phrases such as “He put Montclair on the map” and headlines like “This Flagg flew in front!” However, he “wasn’t out to be an athlete only, so that by the time he got out of the Army, he wanted to concentrate on living and moving on.”

and said, “I guess I could be called a ‘joiner.’” Her activities included writing for the yearbook and membership in the Archery Club and a singing group.)

Four subjects were elected to Who’s Who, including all three participants from the class of 1949. According to the yearbook, “students are elected by a campus nominating committee, and are judged on their outstanding effort, extracurricular activities, service to the school, as well as their academic achievement” (*La Campana* 1957 87). Irv (white) was one such honoree. He participated in “clubs, dances, fraternity, campus committees,” and was president of the Phi Lambda Pi social fraternity for two years. His classmate George, another Who’s Who designee,

had a car, which meant I could stay late. And a lot of them [other black students] were commuting, so when they finished classes, they went right home or they went to jobs. . . . And the first two years, I had money that I had saved. I didn’t have to work, so I got into a lot of activities.

These included Kappa Delta Pi, the education honor fraternity, and Phi Lambda Pi. He also was junior class president¹⁰⁷ as well as vice president and secretary of the Student Government Association. In the last position, he was described by the *Montclarion* as “a fine example of a keen mind, a good sense of humor, and a well-rounded personality all rolled in one. . . . This rising sophomore thinks that teaching is a wonderful profession and cannot wait until he graduates to prove it” (6/13/46).

George acknowledged that “one of the things that was difficult as an African American student both in high school and college was that I was in almost all activities a minority.” At MSTC, he could not remember “any black students on the newspaper or

¹⁰⁷ In 1958, the presidents of both the freshman and sophomore classes were African American (Israel Tribble and Kenneth Walters, respectively). Dr. Tribble received an honorary degree from MSC in 1992.

the yearbook or in those activities.”¹⁰⁸ One incident with the *Montclarion* remained a vivid memory. When Mae West was appearing in “Diamond Lil” at a local theater,

we at the newspaper decided that we were going to have her up for tea and interview her here on campus. . . . The administration said no. They didn’t approve of her and she couldn’t come. . . . But she said, “Well, if Mae can’t go to the boys, let the boys come to Mae.” So we went down there and interviewed her.¹⁰⁹

The 1951 yearbook noted that “Mae West came to town but wasn’t permitted to come to MSTC. . . . Mae survived the snub.”

Ethel M participated in several activities but recalled that “most of us, when the day was over, we got on our various buses and went home, you know, because we had that commuting to deal with, and some of them came from much farther away than I did.” Therefore, although there was quantity in her involvement, the quality did not match that of George and some of the others who could be on campus longer. The person with the most memberships was Juanita, who lived on campus. She was an English major, but not a member of Aldornia, the English honor society. When asked how one was elected to that group, she replied:

I don’t know. My grades probably should have put me in the English honor society. I have no idea. I was just looking in the back of the yearbook, and I said, “Gee, you know, all my buddies were in Aldornia.” And I wondered why wasn’t I in Aldornia. I don’t know. I can’t answer that and I won’t speculate.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁸ However, at least three black students did work with the *Montclarion* during the years George was there, including Ethel M as research editor, Juanita, and Gloria Vaughan Curry. In addition, Dorothy Mayner and Lois Johnson were members of one of George’s groups, Inter Nos (the Latin club). It is possible that they were not especially active and therefore not remembered by George.

¹⁰⁹ Another famous woman interviewed by the student newspaper, the aviator Amelia Earhart, was not so controversial (3/29/34).

¹¹⁰ Gloria Vaughan Curry, the only other African American student in Juanita’s class and a fellow English major, was not in Aldornia either. But neither was Marie, a white subject with a high grade point average in English about whom the yearbook staff wrote: “If you want to know anything concerning English literature, from modern novel to poetry, ask Marie. It isn’t possible that there is an English course Marie hasn’t taken and yet she always has the time to help a classmate, praise a friend, and make new students feel at home.” Marie attributed the slight to “politicking” by certain student leaders.

When questioned about whether that was an issue for her at the time, she said: “Nah, probably not. I don’t recall.”

Among her many activities, Audrey (white) was vice president of the Student Government Association. She remembered that “only the fellows got elected to president in those days!” When asked if women ever aspired to the position, she responded: “No, you know, it’s . . . kind of like the question of the black students. It was just—you didn’t even think about it. . . . That was the way it was. We never even thought of it twice.”¹¹¹

Moe (white) was the third Who’s Who designee. Like other highly engaged students, he had a diversity of interests. One was the Players drama club, and he remembered an incident with the last play directed by Dr. Bohn that involved two African American students.

One of the characters was a black elevator operator. . . . [Dr. Bohn] asked George Harriston to play the part and George mentioned it to his father. His father said, “Now, you’re not going to play any demeaning elevator operator!” So Randall Carter took the part and did a nice job. . . . There weren’t that many black parts in those days.

Frances said that in College High School “everybody was involved because, like I said, there were only 25 of us in the class.” Among other positions, she was elected class president, class treasurer, and Student Council president. She also was “very much a participant” with various organizations including the newspaper (co-editor), yearbook, cheerleading squad, and drama club—where her contributions were backstage. “I wasn’t encouraged to try out because . . . blacks on Broadway . . . were servants. They weren’t, you know, leads or anything like that.” However, she was unperturbed due to a lack of

¹¹¹ While Audrey’s observation was accurate for the years she was on campus (September 1939 to January 1943), there had been a female SGA president in 1932. The next woman would not be elected until later in 1943, when the SGA had its first all-female SGA slate (*Montclarion* 5/18/43). Marie confirmed the *Montclarion* article and said the situation was due to the fact that there were no men to assume the positions. Women took over only by default!

interest in having a role: “not because of being a maid, but I was not—the stage was not my thing.”

Lillian, the fourth student elected to Who’s Who, was a resident. She had membership and leadership positions in many campus organizations, including the presidency of Sigma Alpha Eta—a speech honor society that was, according to a caption in the 1954 yearbook, the “largest, most active chapter in the country.” (Her brother Kenneth Pettigrew also was an officer of the society in his senior year, when she was a freshman.) As a senior, she was honored with the bestowal of the most coveted award: the Citizenship Award. “When I knew I was getting that award . . . it just was so astounding!” One of her involvements was also Players. As a speech major, she could participate in any of the Players productions and was required to direct a show. Yet she never mentioned any racial incidents involving the club. Bernice, however, did recall that her good friend Connie Williams was active in Players and had appeared in one or two group scenes.

They found it difficult to find parts for “blacks,” in quotes. . . . They wanted her to play a maid, and she came and sat and talked with me. . . . I said, “Well, play it if you want, but I wouldn’t play it!” . . . I was summoned to the office by Mr. Fox—who I think was in charge of the Players at that time—and he talked to me about it. And he says, “Connie has a good opportunity to play. It’s a bigger part than she’s had and we’d like her to play it.” I said, “So? What have I got to do with it?” He says, “She won’t play it unless you— You have to convince her that it’s okay with you if she plays it.” . . . I told her, you know, “Play it; it’s fine.” . . . Well, she played it. . . . I think there were probably a couple of times during her tenure with that group where there was some problem about a part for her.

Bernice believed the “problem” was not necessarily one of overt prejudice. “No, it was the time.” A decade earlier, Thelma A had accepted the role of a maid in a Players production. When asked how she felt about it, she could not remember exactly but added: “I guess it was an opportunity for me to be an actress. . . . I doubt, though, that I would have had any parts other than just that, because of color.” A few years later,

Reuben landed the role of the Emperor Jones in a Eugene O'Neill play that was directed by one of his classmates. He explained, "That's the only time I ever did anything like that, but it was just the idea of doing something different than being all science all the time."

Vernell's interests ranged from playing in the band to performing with the Dance Club to presiding over the honorary history society, Rohwec.¹¹² But she was perhaps best known on campus for her magnificent voice. According to Marie (white), "Vernell McCarroll was very active in the Choral Speaking Club, and she was the star performer they had there because she had such a wonderful voice." The yearbook also reported that her "beautiful voice" could "often be heard expressing her clearly thought out views."

Bernice, a resident, had a wide variety of interests that included academic, artistic, human relations, and social activities. Like other African American students, she was a member of a campus social sorority. Patricia, also a resident, was president of Mu Sigma, which she described as "the dormitory sorority."¹¹³ She also served on the Class Council (her class initiated the system of representative class councils) and Dormitory Honor Board,¹¹⁴ was treasurer for her residence hall, and belonged to several organizations. The final highly involved subject—using number of memberships as the criterion—was Gerry, a commuter. She belonged to six groups, but most were "not very active" and held "no regularly scheduled meetings"—not even the Commuter's Club!

¹¹² "Rohwec takes its name from the initials of six historians, among whom is Roy W. Hatch, head of the social studies department. Professor Hatch is the faculty adviser of Rohwec, and to him is due the credit of its origin" (*Montclarion* 5/13/32).

¹¹³ The 1959 yearbook confirms that Mu Sigma was organized in 1945 as the first dormitory sorority. In 1958, commuters were invited to join. All memberships were by invitation. Patricia served as president for two years and was one of only two black members during that time (the other was Dorothy Atherley). There also were two Asians. In the photo accompanying the text in the 1959 yearbook, Jeannette was the only African American among 21 members.

¹¹⁴ In 1955, the restrictions imposed on residents were replaced by a democratic honor system initiated by the dean of women, Margaret Sherwin, and administered by representative students (Pettegrove 1958 14).

The seven interviewees in the middle level of official involvement were Howard (5), Jeannette (5), Marie (5), Thelma C (4), Florence (3), Reuben (3), and Thelma A (3). Like all the African American students in the normal school about whom extracurricular information is known (except one), Florence was involved with athletics. She played on the normal school basketball team which, at that time, competed only against the local high school team. The players wore “red serge midi-blouses” to promote the school’s crimson and white colors. Although there was no tennis team, she played at the school for recreation, “and one year when I played, I beat everybody, so I was the champ!” But regarding sororities, “I would not have been interested, even if they had asked me, which they would not, because you didn’t ask the black girls for anything like that then.”

When questioned about other activities or clubs on campus that would have welcomed black students, Florence replied: “There must have been. But you see, for the girls who lived on campus I could see where they would stay. I had to get home on the trolley car before dark. . . . There weren’t any activities immediately after school that I could go to that I knew of.” Her single extracurricular activity other than sports required a decision similar to those that would be made by future black students regarding theatrical opportunities.¹¹⁵ The normal school was participating with the town in an Armistice Day historical pageant. Florence and her black classmate, Mary Womble, were asked if they would represent slaves in the pageant.

We said yes. The funniest thing—some of our friends in Montclair said, “Why would you do that?” I said, “Why not do that? We are representing our forebears. Whether you like it or not, they were slaves. So wouldn’t you rather see us up there with our little old black faces than to have some of those girls

¹¹⁵ Before Florence, Amaza Morris ’20 was in the Athletic Association Minstrel Show. Marie Ryerss ’26 and Sadie Alma Bushell ’27 were members of the Dramatic Club. After Florence, Medora Young ’34 was active with the Junior Play Committee. No information is available regarding the type of participation they were permitted. African American members of Players, other than those noted in this chapter, were Ruth Hoppin ’42 and Kenneth Pettigrew ’54.

blackened up, with their hair tied up, to imitate us?” Well, they thought that was a pretty good point.

Although Florence did not participate in many extracurricular activities at the college, “in the YW, I went out for track.”

Thelma A said, “I didn’t belong to but so much because I had to spend most of my time studying. . . . I did it in three years, you know—the accelerated program.” She also “had to catch the train or the bus and go home. I didn’t stay after.” As noted above, however, she did have a part (as a maid) in one of the Players shows. Another commuter, Marie (white), recalled:

They had all these clubs and they urged the students to get into them. . . . I enjoyed my work with clubs. I was not club happy, as some of the other students were, that I went up and became an editor or became this and became that. I was more a person that was interested in my studies.

Thelma C lived on campus, but joined only four official campus groups. One was the International Relations Club, which was intended to foster “awareness and discussion” of “some of the critical issues” of the day.

Reuben, in addition to starring as Emperor Jones in his friend’s play, joined the oldest MSTC fraternity, which was founded in 1929. It was called Senate—“as in, say, Roman Senate, where people—men—came together to discourse on relevant issues . . . plus service.” Another involvement was initiated when his white roommate, a musician, piqued his interest in music. For the benefit of the entire college, “I ran, for awhile, a lunch time classical music program . . . and the discourse would be esoteric.” Howard was a member of the other well-respected fraternity, Agora, which was advised in his time by Dr. Milstead. “Agora spirit” was described in the 1948 yearbook as “synonymous with good fellowship. Its active roll is limited to thirty men who meet bi-monthly. After each meeting dorm girls listen for the serenade of traditional campus songs” (24). All of his other activities were sports-related, leaving little time for

additional pastimes but leading to his designation as the Small College Sprint Champ and, in 1980, induction into the college's athletic Hall of Fame.

The final mid-level participant was Jeannette, who lived on campus. She joined a service-oriented club and sorority as well as organizations related to her major, but her most significant endeavor was the attempted creation of a campus chapter of the NAACP. This quest sparked a flurry of editorials in the *Montclarion* in the fall of 1958 and met with strong resistance from fearful white students. Jeannette had been a member of the NAACP youth group in Jersey City, where young people “were trained to be politically astute, interested in what was going on around us, excellent training in parliamentary procedure, debating, knowing the issues.” She wanted MSTC students of both races to have the same educational opportunity. But many white people felt threatened, wondering if Jeannette saw something so wrong at Montclair that such a group would be necessary.

And then there were black people too who didn't feel comfortable with it because they had not been in an NAACP youth [group], and they didn't know what it was going to do. . . . They were more interested in, you know, being popular. . . . At first you think, “What's the matter with these people? Don't they see the need?” The headlines around that time—you had the Little Rock Nine. . . . There were issues . . . but it was not part of their background. And when I think of some of the places where they lived, I can understand that. Some of them came from south Jersey.

After many meetings with no decision, the Student Government Association finally rejected the new group's formal establishment and Jeannette asked the SGA president for an explanation. His written statement said: “It would be impossible to summarize the many and varied thoughts of those who voted.” Jeannette promptly sent a long letter to the editor of the *Montclarion* (11/18/58): “To SGA, NAACP implies that prejudice and discrimination exist at MSC. To me, NAACP on campus implies that Montclair State College, progressive and modern, is providing teacher education for a changing America”

(2-3). Jeannette knew that the SGA disliked the name itself, and reasoned that they should have focused instead on the purposes of the organization. She noted that “white people have always been welcome in NAACP. It’s been integrated from the beginning. So it wasn’t that issue of a segregated organization or whatever. Today they couldn’t get away with this.”

Interviewees in the low-involvement group were Marilyn (2), Ethel B (2), Roberta (2), Norma (1), and Matthew (0). Matthew said, “I had no involvement in extracurricular that I remember,” and the yearbook corroborates his recollection. Norma “was the president of the Classical Club,” and no other activities are listed for her in the yearbook. Roberta was a member of the Spanish Club and Dalphac, a social sorority that “did a lot around the campus.”¹¹⁶

Marilyn at first claimed that her involvement in extracurricular activities was “nothing. I was too busy running out to work.” However, when reminded that the yearbook mentioned two group memberships, she said, “Oh, that sounds possible.” Evidently, they meant little in her busy life. One of the clubs was the Intercultural Relations Group, for which she was secretary in her junior year. The next year, her good friend Margaret Callen, also African American, was president.

Similarly, Ethel B declared that her extracurricular activities were “none.” When reminded of one membership, she shrugged: “That was just a club.” Regarding a second one, she said: “I don’t remember too much about that. Maybe I didn’t go to too many of the meetings!” She reflected that the fraternities always had black members “because the

¹¹⁶ The D and the C at the beginning and end of Dalphac stood for “dorm” and “commuter,” and the “alpha” in the middle symbolized the first sorority for both residents and commuters. It began with five from each group, and they planned activities to encourage interaction.

men were macho and what have you.”¹¹⁷ However, she did not believe African American women belonged to sororities unless they lived on campus—which she did not. After she had been at Montclair a year or two, Ethel B recalled, “they organized another sorority and that included more blacks. . . . But actually, other than the AKAs, I was never really interested in campus sororities.” The Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority (which was not an official campus organization) was important to several African American women and will be discussed in a later section dealing with social life.

Number of African American Students

Most interviewees would have received an A for accurately recalling the number of African American students in their own class. But quite a few would have failed a test of how many black students were on the campus altogether. This finding is not surprising given the academic and social structures at Montclair that fostered cohesiveness within classes and, even more, within majors in each class—but not necessarily within the college as a whole. The relative lack of significant interaction between residents and commuters exacerbated the divisions.

Only seven African American subjects admitted not knowing all the other black students on campus. Matthew said that Kenneth Pettigrew, the only other African American in his class of 1954 and a fellow social studies major, and Mary Reid, a year behind him, “were the only two black friends I had at Montclair.” However, during his four years he might have known 31 African Americans. Members of the class of 1953 could have encountered approximately 30 black students during their four years on

¹¹⁷ Three of the five black male subjects in this study (George, Reuben, and Howard) belonged to essentially white social fraternities. Other black students were members as well. Randall Carter '48, Herman Sommers '49, George White '52, and Samuel Cameron '55 were in Agora and Frederic Martin '57 was in Senate.

campus. But so few did Bernice actually know that she guessed there were 40 or 50, and “there might have been more.” She knew one of her classmates only through their mutual membership in an off-campus group and explained: “There was no interaction with the people who were commuters, basically. Gerry we knew because we had met her through the sorority. . . . She was a math major and I never ran into her.” Gerry herself, also in the class of 1953, remembered “seeing only about five other African Americans on campus.”

Dormitory resident Jeannette guessed the number of black students at 10 or 12 across the four years, but actually there were about twice as many. She said, “Oh, we would know at least the faces. You couldn’t help but notice them, you know. We’re highly visible!” But she acknowledged, “We may not have picked up on all of the commuters.” Resident Juanita said “there were a lot more students who commuted that were minority than those who were on campus.” She added, “I probably knew those who were in the dorm, but I didn’t know all of them. . . . We didn’t have that much contact with the commuting students except for Gloria, who was in my sorority.”¹¹⁸ Gloria Vaughan Curry was also an English major, like Juanita.

Although there were at least 22 black students during George’s four years on campus, he guessed that “there could not have been more than a dozen African American students, if that many.” When asked if he knew all of them, he said: “I looked at your questionnaire and I sat down and I thought and I thought and I thought—and I said golly, I don’t think so.” But he was an unusual commuter, as he explained: “I had the advantage of being able to drive for a couple of years, of being able to spend the time on

¹¹⁸ Resident student Thelma C, on the other hand, said: “There were people here who commuted. And a lot of times, you knew them and so you tried to find them or they tried to find you so you could spend some time with them.”

campus, which a lot of the people did not. Some of them took three buses to get here.”

Therefore, they were not on campus long enough for him to become acquainted.

The division between new and mature students was noted. Bernice said: “Some of the upper classes didn’t pay us any attention so I didn’t even know them!”¹¹⁹ Jeannette agreed that it would be difficult to know everyone, even though “there were so few of us over four years,” because “you usually go with your class or your age group.” Matthew commented that “as a freshman, I wouldn’t have known the upperclassmen, but as a junior and a senior . . . I was the kind of person who probably would have looked them up . . . and made it a point to meet them because there were so few of us.”

Roberta considered, “I would say there were maybe half a dozen, maybe seven, in . . . the class I entered.” In fact, there were exactly seven (not including dropouts, if any). But she was the only African American in the entire Foreign Languages Department, and did not believe she knew all of the other black students on campus. “I have no memory of the other classes. I only remember my group and certain individuals.” She was able to name a few, including Patricia, Howard (whom she dated), and Joyce: “She was very bubbly and delightful and liked by everyone. . . . She was just all over the place all the time.”

Nevertheless, 15 African Americans did believe they knew all of the others. Norma lamented that “there were no Afro-American men on the campus at all,” and she was able to name each of the other black women during her four years: Katherine Bell, Medora Young, Ruth Earley, and Jessie Scott. Vernell also got the number and names of

¹¹⁹ The only other black resident when Bernice and Connie Williams arrived in 1949 was Juanita. All of them were from Atlantic City, but junior Juanita did not mingle much with the two freshmen and they lived in different dormitories. Nevertheless, Juanita did remember the garrulous Bernice: “She was quite a conversationalist.” Curiously, the description of Juanita herself in the yearbook includes “vivacious conversationalist.”

black students on campus exactly right. As an undergraduate at Newark State Teachers College, Alma recalled that there were four black students in her class of about 120, “and over the years at Newark State there had been consistently two, three, four. . . . And not only did I know most of the black students before me and behind me at Newark State, but knew who they were for years afterwards—knew about some that I never met.” In fact, she was well acquainted with the situation at MSTC as well, where her future husband Tom “was one of two black males graduating” in his class. She went on to name all of the black students at Montclair in the years immediately before, during, and after Tom was on campus, missing only three. When asked if her husband knew all of them, she replied: “Probably so, I’m sure he did. . . . When there’s so few, you just sort of know each other.”

Ethel B said, “If I didn’t know them personally, I knew them by seeing them.” Likewise, Lillian said: “I could identify them, yes. I didn’t know them personally.” Ethel M had a “speaking acquaintance” with all the other black students, even though she did not feel particularly close to any of them “because they weren’t in my classes.” She remarked that when there are only a few African Americans, “you have this camaraderie with them even though you don’t know them especially. But we sort of sensed something among us.” She remembered “walking down the hall and seeing another black student and always, you know, a smile and a hi and that kind of thing. . . . Yes, definite connection.” One exception was a student whom she knew to be black, “but he obviously didn’t want anyone to know and he was passing.” Therefore, he would not speak to Ethel M, although their families were acquainted.

Reuben recalled, “I certainly was very collegial with the several African Americans that were on campus.” He estimated six to eight black students in total during his years on campus, although actually there were approximately 22. Nevertheless, “we

more than likely knew each other and/or we knew of each other, and we certainly would speak to each other if we saw each other.” Like Reuben, other subjects thought they knew all their African American colleagues, but in fact that was not possible given the number they believed were at Montclair. Patricia, for example, estimated the black students at about four or five on the campus as a whole—“maybe more later, but very few, very few at first.” She was correct in noticing an upward trend, but there were six in her class alone and 19 in the entire college during each of her first three years (29 in her senior year). Thelma C, a resident student, also underestimated. She thought there were about 13 black students, “maybe about 10 women and three men,” when the actual number was approximately 22. “I was not very close to all of them, but we all spoke.” Marilyn thought she knew all the black students, and said her friends “all griped about the same thing—about having no men around. All the men were in the army or whatever.” Interestingly, when asked how many African American students were on campus during her three years, she missed the lone black male (plus the six freshmen who came in during her senior year).

Katherine would not answer directly the question of how many black students were on campus. When asked if she would have known all who were there, she said, “Perhaps so . . . yes” and then continued: “I don’t know how many were there. I only know that I was there. . . . I was the one identified.” It became clear during the course of the interview that Katherine, who had an exceedingly light complexion, was very much aware that some of her classmates (and, later, colleagues) were “passing.” She had developed the deeply ingrained habit of not noticing the races of other people so as to protect their secrets if they wished to keep them. Even when names of other black students were suggested, she elegantly avoided confirming their racial background without refusing, however, to acknowledge their acquaintance.

Frances was the only black pupil in College High School,¹²⁰ and had no contact with the African American college students “other than if we saw each other in the hall.” The only one she knew was Ethel M, because “her family and my mother and I attended the same church.” Frances did remember a comment made by a black student following his observation of a CHS social studies class. “We were talking about our family background. . . . I could talk about grandparents, great-grandparents. . . . He was amazed that I could go back that far.”

The white participants were uneven in their remembrances. Marie’s memory seemed to be the most comprehensive, although in her class of 1943 “we only had one African student, Vernell McCarroll.” She then accurately named all the black students from other classes during her four years, missing only one. Her classmate Audrey also readily named Vernell as “the only black student in our class.” But she could not say how many other African Americans might have been on campus in other classes, explaining that she simply did not pay attention to race. “Frankly, we didn’t think much of her being black. We were all here together. It was a very small enrollment. We had 500 students and 50 faculty, so that we were all a community.”

The two white men from the class of 1949 also responded differently. Irv thought he knew most of the African American students, and named George who was a fraternity brother in Phi Lambda Pi and an editor with the *Montclarion*. But other names did not come to mind. Moe thought there were “maybe half a dozen” black students and, like Irv, named their classmate George who was prominent on campus through his work

¹²⁰ She was also the only black student in her MBA class at Montclair many years later.

with various publications.¹²¹ As for knowing all the other black students on campus, he said: “I had no choice. Then, the campus was so small and in all the activities I was in, there were so many chances to meet them, I had to meet them all.” He went on to name a few students.¹²²

George commented that “the black students tended to hang out together” and “ate lunch together. Of course, I was hopping from table to table because I knew just about everybody, but we ate lunch together.” Other participants remembered it quite differently. Patricia said, “We mixed with everybody. . . . There was nothing like where you just hang around with your own [black] group.” Gwen agreed that there was not any tendency to do things together as a group. Marilyn said, “As far as I can recall, there was nothing in the way of the black students staying to themselves and the whites. We all sort of mixed and mingled.” Jeannette noted that “there weren’t that many of us to form cliques,” especially since “we were spread over four years.”

Bernice stated that at Montclair, “We didn’t have a group.” But when she went to law school, where everyone commuted, “I could tell you exactly how many” African American students there were “and we all used to sit around in the cafeteria and talk.” She suspected that did not happen at Montclair due to the different focus of residents and

¹²¹ Moe elaborated about George: “George was one of the most talented poets I have ever known. He wrote some of the most beautiful sonnets: Shakespearean sonnets, Spencerian, and publishable, good, solid classical sonnets.”

¹²² Moe had a torrent of trivia in his memory. One story concerned an older black student named Luther Harrington who, like Moe, was a veteran. He “was a high jumper. And he would fake out the opposition. When the bar was about this high, he’d say, ‘Pass!’ and they’d look at him. And then it would get a little higher and he would say, ‘Pass!’ And when it would get even higher, ‘Pass!’ And then they would jump and they’d be looking at him while they were jumping, and at times they would knock the bar down! And when the bar got to the height that he thought he could make, he would very calmly get ready, take one jump and go over. And he didn’t always get first place, but he usually scored either a one or a two or a three. And as he said, ‘At my age, I don’t have many jumps left in me.’” His 1949 yearbook describes Luther Harrington as “the grand old man of the track team.”

commuters.¹²³ However, by the late 1950s, an informal group that called itself the Black Organization for Success in Society—creating the perhaps provocative acronym BOSS—provided a forum for all African American students to meet one another.¹²⁴

Residence and Welcome in Dormitory

African Americans did not live at the Montclair State Normal School or Teachers College until the admittance of one person for one semester in 1933, and it would be 13 years before the next person arrived (by administrative error, according to campus legend). After she broke the ice, other black women were admitted—generally into single rooms. White male veterans had shared a women’s residence hall since the early 1940s and then moved into temporary quarters. When the first permanent residence for men was opened in 1955, at least one African American was among its inhabitants. He had a white roommate. This section records the facts and feelings of the 10 black and two white subjects who lived on campus for at least one semester.

Florence was a student in the Montclair State Normal School in the late 1920s and recalled:

We couldn’t live in the dormitory. They had only the one, Edward Russ Hall, but black girls couldn’t get in there. . . . Some of the girls who went to Montclair Normal School came up from the shore. They had to live at the YW. They couldn’t live on campus. But they did this because they wanted the education.

Marie (white) concurred that minority students

¹²³ Contrast her view with that of Juanita, who had a rather different experience as a commuting graduate student at Penn and Rutgers. “I went in, took my courses, . . . came back home and had to go to work the next day. . . . There was no sense of—not even that sense of togetherness with people and even fellow students. Because to me graduate school was a different kind of experience. You go in, you take it you’re going to learn, you do your papers, you do your research, and you go back home.”

¹²⁴ By 1970 BOSS apparently had been recognized as an official SGA organization. However, reminiscent of the earlier struggle to establish a campus chapter of the NAACP, it was not eligible for the top tier of SGA organizations, which were required to “serve the whole student body.” A BOSS representative asserted that it did serve the entire student body and that meetings were open to anyone who wished to attend.

did not live in the residence halls. There were very few of them. They lived down in the Crane House. . . . The black YWCA had taken it over, and so minority women students being very, very scarce, they lived down there, in the rooms down there, and then commuted up here to the college. They did not live in the dormitories.

The only African American resident who expressed even a hint of discomfort in the halls was the pioneer, the fair-skinned Katherine, who said, “I guess so, yes. I was the first.” She explained that there was a dormitory quota for students from certain counties that were close to the college, and she lived in Essex County where Montclair State was located. “And so, while waiting to come into the dormitory, I was placed in a campus house.” That was one of the local private residences accepting students who could not be accommodated on campus. Her unhappy experience in the house will be described in a later section dealing with racist incidents. Katherine finally received a place on campus when she came back from a year in France. She was assigned a room in Chapin Hall where she spent one semester before returning home to practice teach. Although she did not learn of the following episode until about 50 years after it occurred, the pain was severe when another alumna who had been a resident told her about it.

The dean of women . . . had called all of the girls downstairs in the living room and had told them that Katherine Bell would be coming into the dormitory. And I don’t know what she said, but I didn’t know anything about it, thank heavens, because I think I would have been unhappy.

And the purpose of the dean’s convocation?

Oh, well, to tell them who I was, my racial identity! Yes, oh, yes. And there’s more to it than that that I know nothing about. The girl who started to tell me more about it is no longer with us, but I’d like to follow through just for my own interest. But that’s what was done. And I wasn’t aware of it. . . . But other than that, I was very happy in the dorm.

Katherine had a single room at her own request. “Oh, definitely. . . . And my good friend was the French exchange student, naturally. She lived in Chapin Hall, so we were able to speak French together. And so, I had happy days there.”

Frances did not live on campus, of course, as a College High School pupil. But later, as a freshman at Mount Holyoke, she had an experience reminiscent of Katherine's at Montclair.

The whole experience was kind of spoiled for me because in my freshman year, we had a gal who was from the South. . . . One night, early in freshman year, she took a group of other girls on the floor into her room and . . . told them that we have to be nice to Frances because she's black. . . . And one of my friends told me about it. . . . That kind of . . . made me more isolated, which I tended to be anyhow.

As indicated in Chapter II, the second African American resident at MSTC was Ophelia Bland. She arrived in 1946 and allegedly shocked the administrators who evidently had expected a white woman. She spent the first semester alone in a makeshift room, segregated by a floor from all other occupants of Russ Hall except the housemother. The second semester (or possibly the second year), she tripled with two white women who were pleased to share their room with her, at the dean's request. She then alternated between living on campus and elsewhere during her final years.

In the meantime, Juanita arrived in 1947 as a freshman and also lived in a single room, although it was on a floor among the other residents. She said the single room was her choice and reflected: "I felt okay, but it was awkward at first. Because I remember crying and calling my mother every night and telling her I wanted to come home." The reason she gave was that "in those days they had freshman hazing, so that's why I cried and wanted to come home. I was homesick. . . . I would just go in my room and close my door" to avoid the hazing. But:

The other freshmen on the floor decided that I was getting away with murder and they had to do things I didn't have to do, so they made certain that I was included in the group! . . . One night they all came and knocked on my door and came in my room, and from then on in, we became great friends.

Juanita “was the first black to live on the campus at Montclair for four years. . . . Others had been there, I understood, but they never stayed. I stayed and I enjoyed it and I had very good friends.”

When Juanita was a junior, Nina Hall '52 lived in her building, Chapin Hall, and Bernice and her friend Mildred Constance Williams arrived as freshmen in Russ Hall. Even though the two freshmen, like Juanita, were from Atlantic City, they were not well acquainted. Bernice recalled that “Juanita had lived on campus and she was here a year ahead of me, maybe two years ahead of me. But prior, . . . there were no blacks who stayed in the dorms. You could go to the school, but you couldn't stay in the dorm.” She also remembered that the woman who lived downstairs in her building at home had been involved in a statewide battle to integrate the college residence halls.

“You're going to Montclair? Oh, good, good. And you're living there! That's good.” Because she said, “You know, just a few years ago we had to fight to get that.” And I don't know whether it's just that they just said “no” you couldn't or whether somebody tried and couldn't, or this was a policy—I don't know. I really don't know.

Like Katherine, Ophelia Bland, and Juanita before her, Bernice started out in a single room. She remembered: “I had never had a room to myself.” She said rooms were selected by drawing “cards and the high card people could select their rooms. There were only four single rooms, I think, two on each end.” She drew a high card and selected a single room. “Well, Connie was furious!” because she had anticipated rooming with Bernice. But “I loved that room. It overlooked New York; I could see the skyline. . . . I was in seventh heaven! For the first time in my life, I had a room to myself.” Connie doubled with a white student in Russ Hall. When they all moved to Chapin Hall as juniors, “there were no single rooms, so she and I roomed together for the last two years.” Bernice and her friends “did a lot of fooling in the dorm. I mean, we had

a great time. I really enjoyed the dorm life.” She also observed that if the housemother “had feelings about housemothering black ladies, she didn’t show it.”

Thelma C transferred to Montclair from Trenton State Teachers College in the spring of 1951 as a sophomore. She had a single room in Russ Hall for one semester. “I enjoyed that because I liked my privacy. And I like to sleep!” For the next two years, she lived in Chapin Hall with roommates. Although she returned home on weekends, she felt “very welcome” in the dormitory. When Gwen received a scholarship to stay on campus for one semester, she roomed with Thelma C and reported, “we’re still good buddies.” Gwen felt “very welcome by everybody” and said, “We used to hang out in each other’s rooms and have a good time. . . . That was just the best part of the whole thing, and that’s where I really met some more of the black students, because a few of them lived on campus.”

In 1952 Joyce and Patricia both came to Russ Hall as freshmen and, two years later, moved to Chapin Hall. Joyce “always lived alone, so I didn’t have a problem of roommates. . . . Aside from the fact that it was my choice to always live alone, nobody ever asked me either, so that might have been a consideration. I really don’t know.” Nevertheless, she felt “very welcome.” Patricia, on the other hand, at first had a single room but after that semester “almost always had [white] roommates, and we got along very well.” She, too, felt welcome. In 1953 Lillian arrived in Russ Hall.

I had a room to myself, although you could have had a roommate. But I didn’t. . . . In Chapin, you had to have a roommate. All the rooms were doubles. . . . In Russ Hall, all the black students were in singles. We just automatically got single rooms. . . . I thought that was just absolutely wonderful because I had never had a room to myself before. But I do think there was a feeling that— And later, if black students, if they wanted to find a roommate, they did. And

they even did that in Russ Hall. I remember that there were roommates, but no black student came in, to my knowledge, in a double room.¹²⁵

When urged to recall how it struck her to be assigned a single room, Lillian replied: “We didn’t make it an intellectual issue. . . . And there were only probably three or four single rooms, so I think the decision was made to do it that way.” She believed that Barbara Hughes ’55 also was assigned a single room in her first semester, and subsequently had a white roommate. Lillian’s own roommate when she moved to Chapin Hall as a junior was a white student who approached her with the idea. “We were great roommates! But there was no issue about it.” Lillian said that for her and other minority students in the residence halls “it was good” and she “was always very involved.”

Jeannette recalled living in Chapin Hall as a freshman in 1955, although first and second year students had usually lived in the older building, Russ Hall.¹²⁶ She specifically remembered three other African American women who lived on campus, and “there might have been others.” Speaking for all of them, she said: “I think we felt comfortable. You have to remember [we were] the kind of people . . . who make our way anywhere.”

Also in 1955, Stone Hall was built as a men’s dormitory. Reuben moved in as a sophomore and “stayed on campus for two years. . . . When I got married, I moved off campus.” He remembered that “there might have been two or three other African

¹²⁵ However, Katherine and Joyce both said they had single rooms even in Chapin Hall and Connie Williams always had a roommate, even as a freshman in Russ Hall. And Lillian herself later recalled that two black students who later dropped out roomed together as freshmen.

¹²⁶ The 1946 yearbook states that “all dormitory students leave Russ at the end of their sophomore year in order to transfer to Chapin Hall for the last two years of college life. Chapin is essentially an upper-classmen’s dorm” (65). However, a white student, Ella Haver ’34, said two freshmen were selected to live in Chapin Hall each year, and she felt greatly honored to be one of the two in her first year (conversation on 4/30/94).

American males in the dorm. . . . I didn't recall any of them ever coming up with a problem."

Two white interviewees lived on campus as well. Audrey (white) commuted for the first year. As a sophomore in 1940, she lived in Russ Hall and the next year went into Chapin Hall. Then "they moved men into the dormitory in Chapin, which was a really big move!" She remembered "a solid wall between the women and the men. And then they would have little holes . . . that the men put in that wall!" She remembered that "it just was such a fun time, and yet we worked so hard." She could not think of any African American students in the dormitories at that time, and the testimony of others bears out the probability that there were none in the period between Katherine (1933) and Ophelia Bland (1946).

Moe (white) was one of the men who lived in Chapin Hall in the late 1940s, by which time the division between the sexes in that building had been rearranged. "We were on the second floor. There were girls on the first, third and fourth. And our virtue was protected by duct tape on one set of doors." He subsequently moved into the veterans' housing in Robert Hall, a war-surplus building. President Sprague, "who was a charming gentleman, wanted to know if we named it after someone who had been killed in the war." In truth, the vets named it "for obvious reasons. It had plain pipe racks, no fancy fixtures and low overhead. It was named after a clothing store which advertised plain pipe racks, no fancy fixtures and low overhead!"¹²⁷ As the "housemother" in Robert Hall, Moe was surprised one Mother's Day with breakfast in bed.

¹²⁷ Moe claimed that the second veterans' residence, Alka Hall, "sort of got named by accident, again, because of the inhabitants thereof. And then they said they were only going to give us one more small building, and they said, 'That's all.' And so we changed it slightly and said, 'Dat's Hall.'"

When asked if African American men lived in the residence halls or in one of the three veterans' housing units, Moe replied in all sincerity: "No, I don't recall any black students. They commuted from relatively nearby and you got into the dorm if you lived a longer distance." (Moe's one-way commute would have been more than 22 miles and three of the black males in this study did live within a few miles of the college. One of them, Reuben, moved into the new men's dormitory as a sophomore. However, George commuted about 20 miles and Matthew more than 58 miles each way. Perhaps they made a definite choice to commute.) Concerning the possibility of a policy that prohibited their presence, Moe said indignantly: "Oh, hell, no. You know, after World War II we were much more relaxed. I'm talking about at least the veterans. We had served alongside of black units." He shared a poignant account of war-time experiences with African American soldiers.

Among the 13 black commuters, five had spent some time in the residence halls either visiting friends or occasionally staying overnight. George "stayed on campus a lot. . . . I had friends who had rooms. And if there was something going on, I just bunked with them, and it was wonderful. There was no problem—never, ever." He also believed that the black women who lived on campus "seemed to be perfectly happy." Howard said, "Yeah, sure, of course. Yeah, I was up in the dorm." Regarding a younger black man who lived in a residence hall, he stated: "There was very little threat level on campus at that time, so Artie seemed to do very well."

Among the women, Vernell recalled that in the early 1940s she would go to the dormitories "occasionally, but not for any protracted period—not that I didn't like the girls who lived there." She did not know about any African American students living in the residence halls and offered as a reason the lack of funds in their families. "Remember this was in the Depression." During Ethel M's time in the mid-1940s, black women had

just started to live on campus, but she did not know either of them. However, “one of our little group [a white student] wound up staying in the dorm and we visited her a few times.” In the 1950s, Roberta remembered

being in their rooms in the dorm and getting some sense of what the dorm was like. But I did not miss dorm life. . . . I didn’t want to go away. I was still too attached to my mother and father. I didn’t even want a job, to pull away from them. And I was very happy with the commuting, going home every day.

Regarding the feelings of minority students who did live on campus, she answered: “I have no idea. . . . I just know that everyone I saw seemed very happy and content and satisfied.”

Other African American commuters never went into the residence halls. In the 1930s, Norma knew that her friend “Katherine lived in the dormitory. . . . That’s the only one.” She never visited anyone there herself and could not speculate on what dormitory life was like. “As soon as the school day ended, I rushed home.” Tom lived at home during the time when no African Americans were in the residence halls, and it is unknown if he ever stayed overnight there with white friends. Thelma A said that in the early 1940s, “none of us lived on campus that I know of. I’m talking about people of color. And that was that.” She never ventured into the residence halls herself: “I didn’t have any friends there.” Marilyn was “not sure whether they were segregated at that time or not—because I didn’t know any of the black students who lived in the dorm. None of the people that I knew lived in the dorms.” Although she “may have gone in for some kind of a social affair,” she had no contact with dormitory students. (In fact, there were no African American residents during her years on campus.)

By the time Gerry was at Montclair in the early 1950s, she knew that the African Americans “who lived in the dorm seemed to be included. . . . I did not go in the residence halls. I later found out that the minority students who stayed on campus felt

more accepted than I did.” In the same years, Matthew said: “I don’t believe any [African Americans] did live on campus. There might have been one gal who came from Morris County . . . Gwen Boyce. . . . But I don’t know of their experiences at all.” (Gwen indeed was one of several black women who lived on campus, although only for one semester in her case.) He never had occasion to go into the residence halls. However, “if there was some activity at school at night,” he would stay overnight at the home of a white friend. Ethel B knew some of the black women who lived on campus, but never visited in their rooms. They did not talk about how welcome they felt in the residence halls because “it just wasn’t a topic.”

Social Life

Not surprisingly, social life was better for most residents than for commuters because they could take advantage of the numerous activities and hobnob in the dormitories. Black and white students participated freely together in any campus social event they chose to attend. Friends from one’s major often were the closest companions, regardless of race. However, at least two African Americans whose friends from the major were all white also had a nonmajor black buddy.

Slightly more than half of the interviewees (15) had a very positive social life at Montclair State Teachers College. Seven people made mixed comments, especially related to their commuter status and its concomitant lack of full opportunity for an abundant social life. For six subjects, social involvement at Montclair was minimal, with most of their entertainment occurring at home or elsewhere.

Of course, interviewees did not provide a comprehensive list of activities they enjoyed in college, but certain pastimes at and around Montclair State cropped up often in conversation. These included going to the movies (11), attending football games (10),

eating Awful-Awfuls at Bond's ice cream shop (11) and little hamburgers at the Valley Diner (6), playing pinochle and bridge (9), congregating in the amphitheater (4), and drinking at the Orchard Rest (4). Seven people talked about going into New York City, and for two of them it was the true hub of their social lives. For seven subjects, many social activities occurred in Newark. The regional chapter of Alpha Kappa Alpha, a black sorority, also met in Newark and involved nine Montclair women. Nine participants cited the importance of church-related recreation. These off-campus events tended to involve black students only. The following pages provide descriptions of how subjects viewed their own social involvement and the opportunities that were available.

Montclair boasted at least three movie theaters, the one closest to the college being on Bellevue Avenue. Moe (white) said, "It wasn't too expensive and, if you walked, you saved enough money so that you could take a date." Many African American students also frequented the movies and Reuben reported that in the late 1950s there was "no problem up there." This acceptance was in contrast with the situation a few years earlier. Ethel M lived in Montclair, and in the 1940s at one of the movie theaters "you had to sit upstairs." Through the hard work of the NAACP, among others, that policy was changed. Until then, she had not attended often

because I hated the idea of having to put myself in a place just because that's where they wanted me to be. . . . It was becoming increasingly a sore point with all of us, you know. Whereas as younger children, we just accepted and did it and didn't give it a whole lot of thought, it was becoming increasingly insulting and a point of real bitter controversy. And then, of course, it did change . . . drastically, thank God.

The change had occurred by the time Patricia was on campus a decade later than Ethel M. Although Patricia experienced movie theater segregation in her own town, she said: "I don't remember that happening—at least, I wasn't there when it happened in Montclair."

Three of the men played football at Montclair (Howard, Tom, and Moe – white) and other subjects mentioned going to the games. Alma remembered attending football games with Tom, her future husband, “and sort of getting the razz from other [Newark State] students for going to the Montclair games and that sort of thing!” Lillian’s only recollection concerning football was that Patricia

would beg me to stay [on campus] when Cheyney came. Cheyney was an all-black school. She’d say, “Lil, you’ve got to stay! There’ll be so many guys on campus!” . . . I might have stayed once and left without ever going to the game. But I know I never met anybody. I know that I was never there at a place where we were all socializing.

Bond’s ice cream shop in Upper Montclair was a favorite student destination.¹²⁸

“The only place we really went to consistently was Bond’s . . . [for] Awful-Awfuls” (George). “We would get our Awful-Awfuls and then struggle back to campus with them” (Juanita). “We used to go to Bond’s together. . . . If you could drink a chocolate Awful-Awful, they’d give you a free one, or something like that” (Matthew).

We certainly all walked down to Upper Montclair to get Awful-Awfuls! . . . And you know, that caused a whole thing, watching somebody try to take, what, three, and then you could have the fourth one free. It was something like that, where nobody really— They were huge! (Audrey – white)

Bond’s had an advertisement in the *Montclarion*: “Awful-Awful – It’s A Drink – Awful Big, Awful Good – Folks You Ain’t Drunk Yet Till You’ve Slurped An Awful-Awful” (11/7/41). The ad itself was both big and, evidently, good if judged by results.

The Valley Diner was another hangout within easy walking distance. It was dubbed the “Halfway Diner” by some students for its location between the college and Upper Montclair. Juanita said: “We would go there every Thursday night for a

¹²⁸ Bond’s was such a popular place for college students that when the shop finally closed in the 1970s, the enormous trademark Awful-Awful cup that adorned the building was placed on the Montclair State campus. The Bond family’s historic home, located next to the MSU president’s residence on Valley Road, is now owned by the University and used as an office building.

hamburger special—hamburger, french fries and cole slaw. That was a ritual because, of course, we were sick of dorm food.” Thelma C and several others also remembered the diner “where you’d get little hamburgers.” Moe (white) enjoyed the small hamburgers so much that he finagled a part-time job as a short-order cook at the Valley Diner.¹²⁹ In the earlier years, normal school students frequented the “Dirty Man’s Store” at the trolley stop near campus, where they could buy candy and other necessities. Its name derived from another set of loyal customers, the trolley conductors and drivers, who surreptitiously purchased liquor rather than candy. When Ida Stephens took charge of the establishment, the nickname was changed to the “Clean Woman’s Store,” although officially it was “Aunt Ida’s Lunch Box.”¹³⁰

Card-playing rated high with many people. They played in the Rec Room, they played in the residence halls, and they played at parties. The favored games were bridge and pinochle.¹³¹ Matthew remembered “learning to play pinochle and losing my lunch money.” In fact, “most commuters played cards,” said Thelma C, a resident student and card shark herself. One of the pleasures of dorm life for Bernice was playing “pinochle

¹²⁹ In 1925, “when but one solitary man braved the feminine atmosphere, salads, custards, and all foods tempting in appearance, but lacking in substantiality, were the favorites. . . . But with the entry of men a change took place. Beans, potatoes, and macaroni are what football players need; and beans, potatoes, and macaroni are what they got” (*Pelican* 2/26/32). Evidently it still was insufficient. Moe (white—and Irish) noted that in the 1940s the cook in the Russ Hall dining room “must have been Irish because the food was terrible. They were used to feeding girls, so dinner—at times there would be eight people at a table and there would be eight very thin slices of, say, roast beef. And the roast beef was so thin you could read the *New York Times* through it! . . . Actually, the eight pieces would have been enough for one person! Especially if you were playing football or basketball or on the track team. So we made do with hamburgers at the Valley Diner.” In the 1950s the athletes’ pleas evidently were heard and satisfied. Joyce said, “We always made sure we had one football player or some athlete at our table because you got more food sitting with an athlete.”

¹³⁰ Mrs. Stephens’ niece had been a normal school student and called her Aunt Ida, a name that was picked up by other students. One day a man, apparently unaware of the change in management, asked her for whiskey. Failing to obtain it, he requested a glass and poured from his own flask, confidentially whispering: “Don’t let anyone see me.” (Sources: Wilma Lindlof Schulz ’24 and Kathleen O’Brien Kimble ’27 [white students], *Pelican* 12/23/31)

¹³¹ The 1953 yearbook proclaims that Noah Marshall, a black student, was a “pinochle player until job came along.”

and sitting on the floor and talking about boys and whatever and whatever. And I wasn't hitting the books, you know, like I had been in the habit of doing." Finally, Dr. Folsom "asked me what we did at night and I told her and she says, 'Stop playing pinochle and get in that book,' and that's what I did."

The outdoor stone amphitheater was a special spot for relaxation. Students congregated there between and after classes. Romances were kindled and events such as plays, concerts, and commencement were staged in that rustic region. Matthew remembered that in the amphitheater, the night before graduation, "we, the students, put on a show for the faculty and people imitated different faculty members."

Other students were drawn to the indoor pleasures of the Orchard Rest which, despite its pastoral name, was a pub. (Other preferred pubs and eating places were Tierney's, Robin Hood Inn, Mahogany Celb, Verona Inn, Tree Tavern, and Tick Tock Diner.) At the Orchard Rest in the 1940s, according to Moe (white), "dinner was cheap. Whiskey sours were expensive; they were 35 cents!" One day, after earning \$24 at an odd job, he and a friend went "down to the Orchard Rest and we drank \$24 worth of whiskey sours at 35 cents apiece. That didn't happen often." On other occasions, his black classmate Luther Harrington "sat next to me and we had several beers. The bartender didn't like it, but I didn't really give a darn." In the 1950s, African American students seemed to be welcome. "In Montclair, of course, I learned how to drink cocktails at the Orchard Rest," admitted Matthew. "Good heavens," said Joyce, "I know I spent a lot of time there. So, even if I wasn't dating, I was out a lot, you know, because there was always somebody to go there to drink, and you only drank beer. I remember that was all we could afford."

But nothing in Montclair was as attractive to some black college students as the enticements of Newark. Alma and Tom

didn't go to places up in Montclair, as I remember. We went more to things around the city that organizations that we knew about were having. Or if we went to movies, we would go downtown to movies. There were beautiful big theaters in downtown Newark!

Ethel B also remembered that "we didn't hang out in Montclair. . . . I know we went to different places in different parts of New Jersey and in Newark, but not in Montclair." Vernell recalled that students "went to the movies at home or you came into Newark to the museums there, but there was nothing to do in Montclair." Bernice said: "We would get on the 60 bus and go into Newark where Connie had relatives. Sometimes we would stay over and go to parties. We went to dances. And because you had to be back in the dorm at a certain time, we stayed off campus." Matthew remembered: "In the evening we would go to Newark to different kinds of places of entertainment [with] other Montclair students. . . . Most of it was innocent fun." Marilyn and others who lived in Newark did "nothing in Montclair . . . because it was a question of commuting. . . . I had little time . . . to run around the town and look for anything." She and her friends from high school years in Newark "had a little social club" and "used to get together on weekends."

Other students, like Juanita, headed into New York "because we could get student passes" for the theater. Marilyn also remembered they would "try to catch one of those balcony, 50 cent, whatever, student tickets that they had in those days." Howard and his friends often went to Birdland and other jazz places in New York. Vernell would "come into New York and I would go to Vera House for international discussions."

For nine black women, Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority provided a social outlet and the companionship of students from nearby colleges because there "was not a critical mass of African Americans on any one campus to sustain a chapter" (Juanita). AKA was the first Greek organization for black women, established on the campus of Howard

University in 1908—the same year that the Montclair State Normal School opened its doors. Alma said that “it was social things,” but also a base for education in “civil rights, human rights, health, development of people.”

Members of the Newark city chapter of AKA came from the state teachers colleges in Montclair, Paterson, Newark, and Jersey City as well as from Seton Hall and the Panzer College of Physical Education and Hygiene. Juanita remembered that “we had a girl who came down from as far as Keuka College in New York.” Bernice said, “We had a big group and we had a lot of fun!” Ethel B recalled that a woman had to be “invited to become a member of the sorority. You had to do crazy things! . . . It was hazing but it was more fun and more suggestive than harmful.” Gerry was grateful that “through this organization, I got to know some of the black women on campus. . . . I knew about five of them after joining the sorority.”

Of the 12 subjects who could have been members of the undergraduate chapter in Newark, nine actually joined (Joyce, Gwen, Gerry, Ethel M, Juanita, Bernice, Thelma C, Ethel B, and Patricia) and three served as president (Gwen, Bernice, and Patricia). For most of them, Alpha Kappa Alpha provided a welcome social venue, but two members were not enthusiastic. Ethel M “wasn’t really attracted to a sorority, even if it had been on campus. It just didn’t appeal to me at the time.” She decided to join AKA mainly to please her godmother, who believed it was important to experience being in an all-black organization,¹³² and “dropped out almost as quickly as I dropped in.” Joyce

hated it because . . . I couldn’t see how they could be my sisters after hazing. Hazing was difficult and I mean they were insulting and sarcastic and you had to do dumb things. And then afterwards this big dinner, beautifully dressed, and telegrams congratulating me. And I didn’t feel like they were my sisters at all.

¹³² Ethel M’s godmother also purchased for her and her brothers subscriptions to *Crisis*, the NAACP monthly magazine initiated by W. E. B. DuBois in 1910. That was their first exposure to black history.

Yet she went to meetings occasionally and at one of these was confronted with a new reality in

the house of a black girl whose father was a doctor—in Newark, I think it was—and there were marble tiles on the floor. And that was the first time I was ever faced with any kind of affluence in a black family and it was a shock to me, really. It was really culture shock. . . . I resented it. I said, “Why can’t we have all this?” It was terrible.¹³³

Another grudge Joyce held against AKA was alleged discrimination in southern college chapters toward undergraduate African Americans who were “too dark,” citing as an example the rejection of one of her friends who went to school in the South. “See, there was that kind of discrimination outside of the northeast area.” She admitted that in the Newark chapter, “it wouldn’t happen; not really.” In later years, Joyce was glad to be a member of the AKA graduate chapter. “But as an undergraduate, I was not . . . a happy camper being in Alpha.”

Three eligible subjects made conscious decisions not to become AKA members. Lillian said: “I just was not a joiner of a fraternity or sorority. I was not going to join it. I didn’t want to be hazed. I didn’t want to go . . . to Newark to be hazed, and to spend money to do it, which I didn’t have, and then to have to wear certain colors!” Roberta said, “I’m not a joiner.” Neither did Jeannette join. Two subjects (Thelma A and Alma) who were on campus prior to the establishment of the undergraduate chapter joined a graduate chapter as alumnae. Tom was a member of an equivalent organization for black male college graduates, Alpha Phi Alpha fraternity.¹³⁴

¹³³ Joyce’s comment is a sharp contrast to one made by Frances, the daughter of a doctor, who said she fit in with her wealthy white classmates. “When I walked into their homes I wasn’t awed by what I was seeing because my parents’ friends lived on the same level. . . . The only thing different about me was my skin color, that basically I was just like them, only black.”

¹³⁴ It was Tom who interviewed Reuben for the scholarship he received from Alpha Phi Alpha to attend MSTC.

The final activity referred to by several subjects was church. Matthew asserted that “in those days we were all church people.” Both Bernice and Howard had received college scholarships from their churches. Joyce was active in her hometown church.

We had a very large young adult group and a very young minister and his family, and I was very involved. That may also have been why I went home on weekends. . . . It wasn't just going to church. I'd be in church all day. We'd go to visit some church in the afternoon. We'd have some kind of program at the parish house in the evening. It was a constant thing. . . . There were a whole bunch of us around the same age. We were all there. So, whatever I did, I used to do regularly with that group. I was very active in the church.

Norma knew two other black MSTC students, Medora Young and Ruth Earley, “from church affiliations” and “helped all I could at my father's church,” especially by playing the piano.¹³⁵ George had heard about Montclair State from a young woman in his church, Vernell. “When I left school,” said George, “I went back to my old neighborhood and there were my friends, and they were black and white because my neighborhood was integrated. But socially—church and socially, it was pretty much I was with my black friends.” Vernell was active in that same church and recalled the lifestyle with a bit of disdain. “We went to church, we went to school, and came back, and you know, lived in a very prescribed little situation.”

Juanita, however, made it a point to attend church services near the college because she did not generally return home to Atlantic City on the weekends. “Sometimes I would go down to the Dutch Reformed Church at the corner . . . [and] probably shocked some people who went there” as the only black person present. She also participated in a black church in Newark. Another resident student, Jeannette, said, “In the community, I sought out a church.” She attended both the Episcopalian Church and Union Baptist

¹³⁵ Norma added: “But only hymns. And every time they had a guest who was a vocalist, oh, I had inner turmoil, because I couldn't read music well enough to play an accompaniment!”

Church in Montclair. The latter was “a very sophisticated church. At that time, everybody down there had a PhD, it seemed.” They also had good music “and a lot of cultural programs.”

I got to know the people down there because they used to do things for the college students . . . [and] took me under their wing and had me over for dinner. . . . That was enriching for me. . . . Bill Gray . . . was doing his internship there then. . . . He was a Princeton student at the time.¹³⁶

The black interviewees who expressed no reservations about the high quality of their social lives in general at Montclair State explained why. Florence likened her college years to attending a party where she always “makes herself” have a good time.

If people invite me, they expect me to help them make their party a success, and it can't be if I sit back and complain about everything. . . . I like to make the most of everything. I like to make the best. I had some good friends at Montclair State. They were nice to me; I was nice to them. It was that simple.

George exclaimed:

I made great friendships. . . . Those relationships are over 50 years old now. . . . I went to every dance and every football game. . . . Luther Harrington used to go to dances too, but . . . most of the black students did not participate in those dances and social activities . . . because they had other lives, I think, and because they were so used to being with their own group at home. I guess that's why.

As related in an earlier section, the fair-skinned Ethel M had an experience during her first week at Montclair when a comment she made caused other students to realize she was black, and “a whole different atmosphere developed around me.” She believed “it gave them a new insight and a kind of respect for me. . . . I didn't feel ostracized. . . . I think that they were listening with a totally open mind.” She added: “I felt quite comfortable with all students. I never felt in any way uncomfortable.”

¹³⁶ As Jeannette mentioned, Bill Gray “was in Congress, is now in charge of the United Negro College Fund.” The MSU Board of Trustees voted to award him an honorary degree in 2000.

Juanita mused: “I enjoyed Montclair. . . . I think I was very fortunate, the friends that I made up there. . . . It was the same group of us for four years and you form some bonds and some relationships.” For Reuben, “it was an opening experience. It was an opportunity to just grow up. . . . If you wanted to go to any social event that was being held on campus—if you wanted to do that, as far as I could recall, you would be free to go.”

Audrey (white) remembered that “we did an awful lot on very little money.” One such amusement was to dance during every lunch hour. Moe recalled dances every evening in Russ Hall as well.¹³⁷ Audrey said: “The fact that the war hit us so hard was because we were all a group, a community, already. And the war burst that community.” Her relationships with other students were “wonderful” and, she said, “it was a very special time in my life.” Lillian characterized her relationships with other students as “fine, excellent. Never a problem.” The friendships Bernice developed were “good, very good. Nothing comes to mind that is really negative.” Yet she acknowledged that “there were a lot of things we did not do. We just didn’t do them because we did not want to expose ourselves to whatever.” Therefore, “our social activities were done off campus.” It was not that campus events were closed to black students, although

just the numbers made it so that there was no way for us to really know. The commuters couldn’t do a lot on campus because they had to go home, you know. And those, the three or four of us that were on campus, anything we wanted to do, we basically were able to do. Nobody ever said, “you can’t.” Or if they were saying it, we didn’t hear them!

Nevertheless,

a lot of the social activities that were outside of the dorm that were with the boys, or you know, we didn’t take part in. . . . We would not have been comfortable.

¹³⁷ Dancing in Russ Hall had a long tradition. Wilma Lindlof Schulz ’24 (white) remembered that the Russ Hall lounge had no rug and the polished floor was used for dancing every night to the music of a Victrola (conversation on 4/30/94).

That's the way we felt at that time. That I distinctly remember. Connie did a lot more of it than I did. Connie was a very social animal.¹³⁸

Thelma C said: "I felt very comfortable. . . . I felt really good about . . . the other students. You know, they were friendly. If you had classes with them, they spoke. I don't think you could ask for anything more!" Any resident student was welcome to join in whatever activities were proposed. "Whoever was there said, 'Well, I'd like to go.' So it wasn't planned to exclude or include anyone. We just sort of went!" Similarly, Jeannette said: "We had our good times. Nobody thought well, did we invite anybody white or whatever? It just wasn't an issue. . . . I don't think anybody gave it a thought as to whether or not we were integrated." However, Thelma C (like Bernice) did not participate in campus activities that required male accompaniment. "I don't remember going to a dance on campus. It was too much trouble getting a date together. You saved it for the big ones!"

When Roberta was asked if she felt like a part of the campus, she answered: "Oh, yes, very much so. . . . I never had an incident with any other student—never." Howard said, "I was very well accepted. I was a jock!" Patricia noted that her relationships with other students were "fine. I got along very well with everybody." And Jeannette responded "good, good." On weekends, she and her friends went downtown to hear a group of black MSTC singers called The Troupe, "and they were glad to have an audience. Then they went to Paris one year." They returned as professionals and Jeannette asked them to do a cultural program at the school where she was then teaching. Their fee had skyrocketed from the old days and she told them, "You know, if it weren't for us, you wouldn't have had an audience." (They agreed to perform for her pupils at a

¹³⁸ Gerry described Bernice herself as an "outgoing, social being."

discounted rate.) Jeannette also was one of two subjects who recalled with a thrill their birthday parties during college; the other was Audrey (white).

Seven subjects had mixed reactions to their social situations in college. Joyce reflected: "I did have a very good . . . college experience. . . . It was nice there. . . . And maybe it's because I was in so many things that I didn't have problems at Montclair." On the other hand, she said, "I really gained a lot of weight in college. . . . A lot of people were there . . . to get what they called an MRS degree, you know? Find a husband, and I wasn't finding anybody. And it seemed to me that I just ate my way through." She also wondered if her weekend departures for home were related to an underlying feeling of incomplete social acceptance.

When Gwen was asked about her feeling of acceptance in the social life of the college, she replied: "Well, I don't think I could say it was acceptance or nonacceptance, because really I just didn't take part in it because, as I said, I was either going to class or coming home." Yet she characterized her social relationships with other students as "all right."

Alma knew that her husband, Tom, "was very sociable, very popular." In fact, his name was mentioned with fondness and admiration by several other interviewees, both black and white. Like Jeannette in later years, the young couple was active in the youth council of the NAACP, which served as a social organization for African Americans of college age and provided a forum for discussing national events (such as the status of the Negro in the national defense program). Tom was president of the council and Alma was editor of the bulletin. Other MSTC students also were involved.

Marie (white) said with deep feeling, "Oh, yes, I love the college. I loved it." But she also said: "I didn't have the great charisma and the great acceptance among my peers. . . . If you're a very, very good student, you're not liked that much either."

Marilyn said her social life “wasn’t unpleasant, as I recall” and her relationship with other students “was average. I don’t recall any incidents.” She did remember that there were divisions between “students who went to the library” and “the Rec crowd—card player, smoker, Rec crowd.” She was a member of the latter group, which included “the Jewish students for one thing and some of the Italian girls also.”¹³⁹ The library crew consisted of “the WASPs. They didn’t associate with us because . . . we were not exactly up to par as far as they were concerned.” However, “as far as I can recall, there was nothing in the way of the black students staying to themselves and the whites. We all sort of mixed and mingled.”

Matthew described his relationships with other students as “friendly and totally acceptable. We were just friends.” Yet he also observed: “I didn’t make any lasting friendships from Montclair”—which was in accordance with his expectation “because they were there and I was at this end of the state.” In addition, Matthew’s social life on campus was curtailed by the fact that he was secretly married to a hometown sweetheart during his college years.

The seventh subject with mixed feelings about her campus social life was Frances, the lone black College High School pupil who was included in “birthday parties and that sort of thing” at the homes of her fellow pupils. “I was not isolated by my classmates at all, as long as it was school-related.”¹⁴⁰ However, after school hours, she said, “I associated more with my black friends than I did with my classmates” and “spent

¹³⁹ It also included Ethel M, who described herself as “quiet” and “insecure.” Her yearbook reported: “Et’ adds refinement to the ‘Rec.’”

¹⁴⁰ Frances was deeply aware of her isolation during various periods and used the word seven times in the interview. After retiring, the first black president of Montclair (or any New Jersey state college) wrote a short autobiography titled *Memoirs of an Isolate*. Like Frances, he had a privileged West Indian background and experienced isolation.

a lot of time visiting” in New York. It was difficult for her to feel very close to the African American pupils from Montclair High School because they were “cliquish” and thought Frances considered herself “better than everybody else because I went to College High School, so of course, they ‘knew’ I was stuck-up.” Did that hurt her? “Oh, yeah.” Therefore, she socialized with teenagers in New York, where she had lived before moving to Montclair. Her relatives still lived there, next door to Lena Horne. Frances and her friends went to “Birdland and Bop City and those places.”

If I came for the weekend and there was a party, it was assumed that I would go, you know. I kept being shy. I said, “Gee, do they really want me?” But you know, I was always included. But that’s where I socialized and did the things that teenagers do. . . . [Because] their parents were professionals . . . the lifestyle was more in keeping with my dad and mother’s and their friends. . . . That was where I had my fun times. Montclair was kind of like where I went to school.

As with Frances, New York was not an occasional destination for the other doctor’s daughter, Katherine. It was her social center. She explained that the dean of women, Maude Carter, was “responsible for my nonactivity” at MSTC.

When my father took me up there to be interviewed, she took my father aside and said, “Dr. Bell, I hope Katherine does not socialize with the male students because we wouldn’t want to have a problem on the campus.” So, therefore, I was never interested in any of their proms. I never attended any prom, any social dances. . . . Oh, it didn’t bother me. I had too many friends.

Like Frances, Katherine had lived in New York as a child and maintained her social life there.

I went to sorority dances. I would be invited as a guest to the Delta Sigma Theta affairs. . . . Most of my social life was in New York. . . . I remember I would go over to New York on the tubes. I had a boyfriend in Brooklyn who would take the tubes, come all the way to Newark, pick me up, take me back to Brooklyn to attend the Paramount Theater. And I think the theaters in Newark had a “double standard,” too. And my boyfriends were not as fair as I was! And so, rather than being embarrassed, we would go to New York. . . . Oh, it was that way in the ’30s! Yes. . . . So I wasn’t interested in any of the social activities [at MSTC].

Even when she lived on campus for a semester, “on weekends, I would get on the bus and go home and my father would bring me up Sunday night. So I had my social life outside of the dorm.”

Five interviewees in addition to Katherine had minimal social experiences at Montclair, due largely to their commuter status. Thelma A said, “Socially, you know, I was an outsider . . . and I thought it was primarily because I didn’t live on campus.” Although her relationships with other students were “good” and she “was accepted,” she only had three close friends. Thelma A was a shy, transplanted southerner, and her confidence was not bolstered by a letter from her “big sister” (a white commuter student) received before the first day of class.

My big sister told me in the letter she knew she wouldn’t like me because she knew someone else with the same name. . . . She’d never seen me, and I’m a freshman coming in. Well, anyway, I met her and she didn’t like me. . . . She didn’t even know me.¹⁴¹

Gerry was friendly with a white student who rode the bus from Newark with her for two years. “In our junior year, she met some other white students and began to socialize with them. She dropped me like a hot potato.” Another social setback occurred when Gerry “decided to run for class office. The posters with my picture on them were torn down.” Her lingering memory regarding Montclair State was of a very stressful experience.

Vernell couldn’t think of “any college where there’s any social life that I found exciting.” She had “several very close friends,” but “socially the only things I remember are conversations, sitting around and having lunch and talking with people.” She

¹⁴¹ The duties of a big brother or sister from the junior class were to help a freshman “get orientated to college customs, to introduce him to faculty members and upper classmen and, above all, to abolish that strangeness each one inevitably feels” (*Pelican* 9/29/32).

believed “it was as rich as it could be, considering the fact that I was a commuter, and there were no men there. The activities were full. We enjoyed them. We laughed and we joked.” The redeeming factor was that

the caliber of students was a very good one. They were ambitious. They were energetic. And I think that was the thing that I liked—the ambiance was always exciting. . . . There was something about the people who were admitted and about the teachers which meant that you were included.

But Vernell’s true social life was at home. “There was a so-called country club where we’d go every Sunday and we’d play tennis. . . . I had a very good city social life.”

Another black MSTC student, Ruth Hoppin, was her close friend. “I introduced my brother to Ruth and I liked one of her brothers and we went to all the parties together. But that was off campus.”

Norma said her relationships with other students were “cordial” and, in the case of about a dozen white students whom she named, “very friendly.” Nevertheless, she was a loner.

I didn’t warm up to anybody . . . because I had had so many unpleasant experiences in high school racially. . . . Of course, that warped my personality. . . . I had a feeling that I might not be welcome, so I remained on the social periphery. I guess you’d say that was my fault—a defense mechanism. . . . I went to no social events at all—no parties, no dances. . . . I didn’t have anybody that was on the campus to go with.

Like Katherine, she kept her social life and her boyfriends off campus. Two of the subjects with the lightest complexions, both of whom could pass for white, made “choices” not to become very involved socially.

Ethel B “didn’t have much interaction” with other students, “except for that little close-knit group that we had.” Her group was interracial and included people from various majors. Most of her social involvement was off campus. However, she did recall one “very good friend,” a male student who worked with her at a Newark department store. “We just seemed to ‘click.’ . . . When we saw each other, we’d sit down and talk,

you know, and maybe drink coffee together and what have you, and that was it. He was white.”

In contrast to Ethel B’s small group, other interviewees remembered that their closest friends were fellow majors. Thelma C said, “The campus was so small that you would just automatically run into people. Especially if you had the same major.” Matthew recalled, “You had your friends who were social studies majors. . . . Not living on campus, I didn’t get to know the other students . . . other than the ones I was in class with.” He was part of the “Big Five”—“five guys that were in social studies together and we just hung out together . . . The other four were not African American.” Ethel M reported that an

interesting little group of us became friends . . . [and] we were quite a mixture. One was a Jewish girl and one was an Italian American, and another one was German American. . . . We were very close and we sought each other out during the four years.

Everyone in her small group was an English major. Two of Thelma A’s three closest friends at Montclair were English majors. “One was a Jewish girl and the other was an Italian girl.”¹⁴² The third friend was a black Spanish major. Similarly, Jeannette said that “on campus, you would see Annie and Helen and Jeannette together much of the time because of our majors. We were all English majors.” Annie and Helen were white and lived on campus with her, but Jeannette also had a close black friend, Emma Armstrong, who was not an English major.

For resident students, said Audrey (white), “the lounge in Russ Hall was the center of social” activities and “the big thing was the ‘Butt Room’ . . . for the women

¹⁴² Although she did not speak about majors, Marilyn remembered that the Jewish and Italian students socialized most easily with the African Americans. Interestingly, Thelma A and Ethel M favorably mentioned the same ethnicities.

students who smoked cigarettes.” Smoking was allowed only in that room. She described the rules of the early 1940s as “so rigid. . . . We had to be in at 7:00 during the week, in the dorms, and maybe 10:30 to 11:00 on Friday and Saturday nights. And you couldn’t go out on a date unless the fellow was on your ‘approved’ list from home!”

Three other female resident students spoke about the rules under which they lived. A few years after Audrey graduated, Juanita found that dormitory life still

was rather restricted. It was kind of tough, although they were liberal in a sense, because my friends at other colleges were shocked. They said, “Well, how do you get off campus every weekend?” . . . [I said,] “Your parent signs a letter the very first week that you’re in school saying, ‘My daughter has permission to leave Montclair.’” And that’s all we had. And once you get that, you can leave. And other campuses, . . . particularly at some of the private schools—my goodness, they were so strict on females that they couldn’t do anything.

Nevertheless, to maintain some decorum at Montclair, “the boys’ dorms were . . . at the far end of the campus!” A couple of years later, Bernice recalled going to parties and dances in Newark. The dormitory rules included a curfew that was much too early for a fun-loving teenager, so she stayed overnight with friends off campus. But later in the 1950s, the curfew was circumvented with some ease. Joyce described the environment as “very casual. We had one friend who constantly climbed in the windows and slept over. . . . She worked for the newspaper, I think, and she was often there late, so she would stay over” with Joyce or someone else in the building.

Dating

An important aspect of the social life was dating. Twenty participants engaged in dating while they were enrolled at Montclair State Teachers College, although half of them—all African American—went out only with people who were not fellow students. A sizeable number of women (one white and seven black) apparently did not date *anyone* during their college years. Some of them, however, participated in mixed group activities

that substituted for one-on-one dating. Six people declared that interracial dating simply was not done, but four others were personally involved in it.

Ethel M said that in the 1940s, “let’s face it, interracial dating was almost unheard of. . . . It would have been very rare at that time.” During the same years, Frances remembered “having a crush on one of the [white] boys in the class in [College] High School and never saying anything about it.”

We were good friends. . . . We never dated or anything like that. After we got into high school and kids started dating, I never really dated any of the boys. But I would have loved to have had a relationship with this young man, but never, never broached it because that was not—you know, I was very much into my blackness then. . . . I was not interested in forming any real relationships because all I wanted was the education.

Likewise, in the early 1950s, said Bernice, “there certainly was no interracial dating that I saw.” Joyce stated that “nobody did it in the ’50s.” For Gwen and Patricia in the 1950s, there were opportunities but they failed to materialize. Patricia “had a number of young men from other races ask me out, but they were afraid to carry through because they knew they would meet disapproval either from their families or other friends.” Gwen knew

a very nice young man, who was very polite, on the newspaper and he asked me to go to the prom with him. We worked on the newspaper together. So, my mother said, “You can’t go out with him. He’s white!” I said, “Yes, ma’am,” and that was that.¹⁴³

However, some African American students did date white students. Alma met Tom in the late 1930s when he attended a dance at Newark State, her undergraduate college, as someone else’s guest. Before that, he had dated Montclair State students. Did he date white women? “I think he did, yes. . . . And he was so popular that it just

¹⁴³ He became a pediatrician. Many years later, when Gwen’s daughter had children, she referred them to this doctor. The daughter was quite impressed and thought he would have been an excellent match for her then-divorced mother!

follows.” In the early 1940s, Thelma A dated one white student. When asked if there was interracial dating in general, she replied: “Well, I don’t know about others.” She also dated black men from her home area. In the late 1940s, Juanita dated white students “sometimes. But I also dated folks who were students at other colleges who were not white . . . [and] I dated black students from campus.” Howard was on campus in the 1950s. He dated both black and white students at Montclair as well as women who were not at the college.

Six other subjects dated fellow students, although not interracially. “Yes, indeed!” said Audrey (white) about dating.

When I think of my nineteenth birthday! Oh, my word! I had a tennis racket from one, a locket from another. . . . Yes, it was a great time! And not only did I date them from here, but Stevens [Institute]—I had a friend down there, a special friend from high school. And you know, it was a great time in my life.

The two white men, Irv and Moe, both dated. Moe recalled an African American student who “was a real beauty. I remember it well. She was the kind of girl I would have liked to have chased up and down the wallpaper.” He claimed to have refrained only because of shyness, although the yearbook labeled him “MSTC’s Casanova.”¹⁴⁴ He certainly went out with many white women.

George dated his classmates “and people from outside of college too,” whom he met in church and in his neighborhood. From Montclair, Lois Johnson and Betty Jane Thurston “were my dates sometimes at dances. . . . Oh yeah, beautiful ladies; beautiful ladies.” Lillian attended a dinner dance with Howard. In addition, “I did meet somebody away from college and I dated him.” On another occasion, she was one of the candidates for Campus Queen. “You had to have a date, so I had a date! . . . The date for that was

¹⁴⁴ When confronted with the yearbook quote, he admitted: “Well, I had some talent! ‘When to the sessions of sweet silent thought, I summon up remembrance of things past.’”

somebody I knew locally and I couldn't go by myself or I would have!" Roberta also dated Howard, who lived in her hometown. In her sophomore year, she met someone "at a party, and then we dated after that, and eventually got married."

Ten individuals confined their dating to people not associated with Montclair State. When Florence was asked if she dated as a student, she replied: "Yes, of course." But her boyfriends were not from the normal school, where there were no black men and very few white men either. And Katherine, following the advice of the dean of women to stay away from the male students, "took the dean at her word, yes, indeed!" and her dating was "not at the college. No, indeed!" She had a boyfriend in Brooklyn and was friendly with male students at Harvard, Amherst, and Tufts. Her friend Norma also "had boyfriends off campus." She met them "at church, at the YMCA, at Kay Bell's house. . . . All of these men were Afro-American and they were not affiliated with teaching or Montclair." In addition, she worked at Bamberger's Department Store, where she passed for white and the only known black people "were the elevator boys—all of whom I knew, some of whom I dated." Norma resigned herself to being "white on the job and black socially" because "there were so many others doing the same thing."

Marilyn and her friends went out as a group with "about five or six young men" from New York who "used to come over on weekends to take us out." But she also dated someone she had met in high school. Likewise, Gerry dated "a gentleman from Bloomfield College. I knew him from high school." Joyce "had a couple of dates with people that I knew from high school. . . . And I used to date somebody else. . . . I didn't date a great deal." Thelma C said, "Most of the people that I dated or the escorts I got for dances were people that my family knew or that I knew from home . . . but not from campus."

Gwen found that “there weren’t many choices in that area, either—I mean, choosing people to date.” Her mother had vetoed a prom date with a white student, as noted above, so she went out with the brother of an African American classmate. He had graduated from Purdue with a degree in pharmacy.

Daddy didn’t like him because he was too black. . . . [He] was hypocritical. . . . It’s just like white people. They can be very nice and very wonderful, but don’t say, “I want to marry your daughter” if you’re a black man. That’s the end of that. . . . Some of his best friends were black as night.

I pointed out that they weren’t dating his daughter and she replied: “No, exactly.” When she resurrected a relationship with a light-skinned and “very handsome” young man she had met in high school, her father said, “Oh, you can do better than that,” because “he didn’t have a college education.”

Two of the black male subjects only dated the women they would marry in their junior years. Reuben said, “I was married early . . . so I wasn’t dating. I was dating the person that I . . . subsequently married.” He had met her at home and she was not a Montclair student. Matthew had “met the gal that I married when we were eight years old . . . and there was never anybody else.”¹⁴⁵

Seven interviewees had no individual dates at all in college, and neither did Frances in College High School. Vernell asserted that young people in the early 1940s socialized in groups and “everybody had parties,” but

You didn’t date in those days. See, it was a different day. Girls were supposed to be good. The worst thing that could ever happen was to get pregnant. You didn’t go around kissing. You were driven: “You have to get that college education. You have to move up the ladder socially. Don’t be deflected.”

¹⁴⁵ When asked if he dated, he replied: “No, and, if I did, I’m not going to admit it.”

Ethel M lamented: “The dating material—there was none around . . . that I would consider going out with” because most eligible men were in the service in the mid-1940s. “I went hunting all over the place to find a date for that [senior prom]. And I finally called a friend who was about four years younger than I was to take me.” In the 1950s, Bernice “did not date on this campus. There certainly was no interracial dating that I saw, and there were no black men on the campus!” She then acknowledged that there were some black male commuters, but she did not date them. “A lot of the social activities that were outside of the dorm that were with the boys, . . . we didn’t take part in.” Ethel B also participated in group activities, but “not individual dates.”

Joyce, who found her few dates off campus, declared that at Montclair, “the only big problem was dating. There were no guys.” Her classmate Patricia agreed that “there weren’t a lot to date,” but she did meet one black student in whom she was interested—the brother of her friend Lillian. “I really had a crush on Kenneth. He was nice, but things just didn’t work out and nothing came of it.” The man she eventually married (and divorced)

was impressed with the fact that I was a college girl and he had not been to college. Now see, that was a setup for failure. . . . I didn’t have enough dating. I don’t think I had enough exposure to different types of people. That’s why I didn’t make good choices when it came to selecting someone to be a mate. But I didn’t have that social exposure.

Joyce avoided a similar fate with a high school boyfriend. “We broke up because I was going to college and he was not.” By the late 1950s, the situation remained essentially unchanged. Jeannette did not go on individual dates and, “in fact, I don’t know anybody that was dating anybody here at the campus.”

Two subjects met their future husbands through the intervention of their older brothers. Lillian, whose father had died when she was young, said her brother Kenneth “was playing the role of brother and father.” He arranged for a new teacher in the school

where he taught to visit when Lillian came home one weekend, and she eventually married him. Ethel M's brother developed a friendship with someone he happened to meet in a barbershop, but "I think my brother was really thinking about me." Indeed, she married the young man.

Gwen married (and divorced) the "very handsome" man with a fair complexion but without a college education. Howard married a young woman who worked in the MSTC library to whom he had been introduced by a faculty member. Other interviewees shared stories about meeting their spouses after graduating from Montclair State. Vernell met her husband at Virginia Union University when he was the head of the English Department and she was teaching there. Gerry and her husband met in graduate school at Columbia University. Norma's eventual second husband was living in Montclair at the time she was a college student, but they did not know each other then and married in Georgia when both were 78 years old. Marie (white) met her husband, a language teacher, on a tour to Italy with which she rewarded herself after earning a doctorate. And Moe (white) married the nurse who cared for him after he became permanently paralyzed in the Korean War.

Racist Incidents

As indicated in Chapter III, racism has different meanings depending upon the social age and the individual's perspective. What some people gloss over would outrage others. The important point in the question about whether subjects experienced any racist incidents on the campus, as described in the following pages, was to discover if they *perceived* any such occurrences.

The question elicited a number of responses that started out straightforward and then seemed evasive upon further investigation of the transcript. Nineteen of the 24

African American participants, at some point during the interview, said “no”; they experienced no racist incidents at Montclair. However, five of them did cite some *possible* occurrences. But the information on racist incidents was sought through means other than this direct question, and in those contexts doubt was shed on the purity of the “no” response. Among the four white participants, one gave a similar “no, but” response. The remaining five black participants each offered one fairly concrete example of what they considered to be racism at Montclair State. In addition, five people spoke about hostile occurrences in and around the town of Montclair.

Beginning with the last-mentioned group, Ethel M ’48 had been “turned out with black friends of a skating rink and the little stationery store” in Montclair, and they were not permitted to use the town pool either. One hot day, she and her siblings decided to swim at a pool in a nearby town. The ticket seller looked at them skeptically. “I could tell she just didn’t know quite who we were or what we were, and she wouldn’t sell us tickets.” Her brother simply put the money down and they went in. “The police were waiting for us and they escorted us out. . . . There was no law that would back us up if we decided to make an issue of it.”

Therefore, Ethel M was willing to work with a group of Montclair townspeople who were conducting an audit of racial conditions in housing, hospitals, theaters, and restaurants. She led parties of black and white MSTC students in investigating “just about every eating place in Montclair. What we did was the white group maybe would go in first or we would go in first, and then the black group would go in and we would just see and note the differences in how we were treated.” They did not encounter “any

blatant prejudice, but what we found is that in a couple of places, they served us so quickly because the whole idea was to get us in and out of there as quickly as possible.”¹⁴⁶

George '49 recalled that a black student actually was refused service at Highgate Hall, a coffeehouse over the Bellevue Theater that advertised in the *Montclarion*—but apparently did not intend to invite all students.

So a group of black and white students went there and we sat at the table. We took up a few tables, and we weren't going to move and we didn't move. And they finally served us and after that, I think they served black people. And there was one other place, but I can't remember now.

His classmate Moe '49 (white) noted that the bartender at the Orchard Rest “didn't like it” when a black teammate accompanied him. Juanita '51 exclaimed with regard to racial incidents:

In Upper Montclair, New Jersey, I'm certain that there were some! I'm trying to think. . . . I would sometimes walk down the street and the kids would—you know, yell epithets and things like that. I don't know. I think I probably ignored most of it.

Bernice '53 said:

The only incidents that I remember were when I went alone. I went down to a drugstore one time and a woman, she obviously didn't want to wait on me . . . and she called somebody from the back. . . . He sort of pushed her aside and he waited on me. . . . That was really the only one I remember.

The very light-skinned Katherine '34 was one of the five black subjects who recalled a racial incident on the campus itself—the episode described earlier in which the dean of women called all the dormitory residents to a meeting to inform them that an African American student (the first ever at Montclair) would be joining them. Katherine also

¹⁴⁶ A white student, Jean Simmerlein '49, was one of the investigators. “We would go in various types of groups and have our dinner paid for by the sponsor group, a wonderful treat for poor students” (from a personal letter to me dated 8/23/96). Jean was the student who roomed with Ophelia Bland in 1947.

recounted something that happened in a college-sanctioned facility off campus where she lived before moving into the dormitory.¹⁴⁷

When I came into my bedroom one day, my clothes were scattered about, the drawers were open and everything was in disarray. And I went to the housemother, showed her what had happened. She accosted one of the students who was responsible for this and this student told her that I, that Katherine Bell, would have to go because she didn't want to live in the same place with her, the same house with her. And Mrs. Fallon told her that she knew who I was and that she was quite satisfied with Katherine Bell who had never given her any trouble and if this young lady wanted to leave, she could leave. Now, I don't remember whether she left or not, but that's all I do remember. There was never anything after that, anything that happened.

Katherine considered both of these housing incidents to be racist, but they were the only such events she could remember. "I knew that I was Katherine Bell, a little bit different from the others in that I was of the Negro race. And after that was understood, taken as a fact, there was no other problem. I was just another American student along with them."

The racist episode involving Ethel M '48 was related earlier. Administrators at the practice teaching site to which she had been assigned rescinded the invitation when the college dean informed them she was black. Aside from that, she experienced no racist incidents. "I can't recall ever, you know, coming up on any situation where either a student or a faculty member seemed hostile or unfriendly." Gerry '53 described one case of racism. "I decided to run for class office. The posters with my picture on them were torn down." Although the intent behind the action could not be confirmed, Gerry had a general feeling of being left out that made this interpretation plausible to her.

¹⁴⁷ Dormitory rules applied to students living off campus as well. In the early days, the rules included certain study hours and "lights out" times. Kathleen O'Brien Kimble '27 (white) also lived in such a house. She had breakfast in the dormitory on campus, lunch in the cafeteria, and dinner with a local family (not the one with whom she lived) who provided the meal for several students. The family had a player piano and the dinner time was "lively and interesting" (telephone conversation on 5/6/98).

Two members of the class of 1956 blamed racism for dating misfortunes.

Howard '56, a popular athlete, experienced racism "only when I was dating white females" and felt "that kind of reaction where one would know that it wasn't fully appreciated." When asked if the disapproval was ever overtly acted on, he replied: "No, I had too many buddies who would have taken care of it in a very quick fashion."

Patricia '56 also believed it was "just in dating . . . [that] most of the racism would have existed." In her case, however, it was evidenced by the failure of white men to carry out their expressed interest in dating her, which she attributed to racist fears. Howard made the following general observation: "You know how racism runs. It runs the gamut, and you have interface with some people where you think that in some situations they had an ax to grind, but I just . . . worked on around it, really didn't pay it too much attention."

Patricia also had considered the issue of racism: "If something exists, something is accepted as being the way it is, and you go along. Sometimes you're not even aware of it."

Among the 19 black subjects who essentially said they did not know about racist incidents, five people cited *possible* examples. When asked specifically if there were racist incidents, Alma '43 (MA) said, "I don't recall any." Then she added:

My sole experience was that of trying to enter in 1936 and not making it! I'm sure that people who attended there would have many examples and I have heard Tom allude to things at different times, where certainly different faculty members and other staff members didn't mind showing that. They had prejudice, definitely, and they didn't hide it.

From her own undergraduate days at Newark State Teachers College, she remembered two occurrences.

It was there, of course. When we did our student teaching and all students' names were up on the bulletin board with your student teaching assignments and so forth, for those of us who were black, there was a little letter beside our names up on the bulletin board to indicate that we were black. . . . And another demonstration was that school superintendents would come in and interview

students who were about to graduate, possibly to hire some of them. And if they weren't hired, the students could have the benefit of experiencing an interview. But that didn't happen to those of us who were black, and there were four in my class. We didn't have any interviews with any visiting superintendents.

When Thelma A '44 was asked if she experienced any racist incidents with other students, she replied: "Not at all, no." Concerning faculty, she could not quite classify it as racist but remembered "only the one that involved the class situation, where the teacher seemed as though she was a little picky on me. It seemed that way. Maybe that was just her way." Even the episode related earlier dealing with a professor who said Thelma A would feel comfortable at a club meeting in his house because the family had a black maid was not, in her mind, racist. She thought *he* might have felt uncomfortable with her presence, but she liked him very much as a teacher. At his home, she recalled:

I felt all right. I think about it now. I felt all right, but I didn't forget. . . . At that time I knew what was happening, but in retrospect, I even know it more so. I have learned through the years, and I tell my children this, don't accept other people's problems. Those are their problems. Don't internalize them. Live your own good life. Forget about them. . . . I wasn't that smart then. I learned a few things from living.

Bernice '53 said: "I can't remember anything that really was untoward at Montclair in terms of— And by virtue of being on campus, we did everything in a group with the girls . . . so there was a protective kind of thing." Yet, she added, "there were a lot of things we did not do. We just didn't do them because we did not want to expose ourselves to whatever." The one possible "whatever" that came to her mind was the way her audition for the a cappella choir was handled by the professor, Carl Mueller.

When I went in to interview, he gave me his look-down-his-nose look and he says, "Yeessss?" . . . It was very curt and very short. . . . "Well, go in the chorus and come back next year." . . . In September the next year I was sitting right there, so he gave me this look and he sighed and he says, "Well, let's see what you know."

Apparently he was pleased with her sense of pitch and gave her a position. "I had to force it! . . . He didn't expect me to come back. He figured, well, you know, I got rid of

that one.” She added that Gwen was also a member of the choir. “But, you see, Gwen is very fair and if you look on that picture, you don’t even notice that she’s— See, I stand out. I mean, there’s no issue about me being black.”¹⁴⁸

Roberta ’57 said she did not experience any racist incidents and could not remember if her classmates had encountered anything. But there was

one incident where I thought it might be racial, an English professor. No matter what I did in that class, he would never give me anything other than B+. . . . There was a little, tiny brain in the book and I enlarged it to put with my paper. I had sketched it, and he looked down at my paper and he said, in a tone, “Traced, I presume?”—just something about his tone. That’s the only one that I had some suspicion that perhaps he just did not accept me as part of his classroom. And of course since I was academically strong, I don’t know if that added to how he felt. That’s the only incident out of any of my time at Montclair that I felt like that.

When Lillian ’57 was asked if her black classmates had experienced any racial incidents, she said: “No, I don’t think so. . . . Rarely was it a personal thing or rarely did you think that you were going to in some way be treated to just a nasty disposition based on color. . . . There was no one who was unapproachable.” For her own part, she could not recall “any time that we went any place that I was ever made to feel that there was some other thing going on that meant I shouldn’t be there or couldn’t be there or reconsider going back. It never happened.” But her older brother Kenneth had a “run-in” with a literature professor, Annie Dix, “that had some racial overtones to it.”

My brother said that he always felt she . . . would never call on him and never let him participate in the debates. He also felt he was shut down in her class. And then he began to think it was racial and his papers sort of reflected it. . . . On the board she’d have charged words and she would be reciting them. She’d say the words that none of us could say.

¹⁴⁸ At least five other African Americans were members of the a cappella choir (glee club) in the years just before Bernice auditioned. Nellie Pryor Ware ’48 was a dark French major, described in the yearbook as “songbird of the French class” and “collector of work by Negro artists.” Herman Sommers ’49, who was light, served as president for a year. Anne Talmadge Chisholm ’50, George White ’52, and Edward Height ’52 were all music majors; the first two were dark. Several black students were members in the years following Bernice.

Some of the words were

savagely rude ethnic names, and so on, and she would just parade around. And my brother's sense of it was she was having a good time of it—that the lesson went beyond just what the lesson ought to be. She defended herself by saying she taught this because she wanted people to know words are only words, and that once you get past that, then you can express other things.

Lillian later had a different course with the same professor “and it was sort of innocuous.” Miss Dix brought in a guest speaker who appeared to be “an African prince, and he was brilliant and he was chatty and all that. And the juxtaposition of all the things that I knew about her and then what I saw here was ambiguous and confusing to me. I did not like her because my brother didn't like her.”

The remaining 14 black subjects basically did not encounter any racist incidents, but . . . And that is the point. Many of them added a literal or figurative “but” to the “no.” Beginning with the earliest subject, Florence '28 said that “everybody was always nice. I had no incidents whatsoever. It just seems to me that sometimes we make a mountain of a mole's hill.” The interviewer pressed: “There were no times that you ever felt that, because of your race, you were excluded from anything or [there were] any negative incidents that occurred?” And Florence replied:

No. I'll tell you. Maybe we didn't spend enough time on campus, other than to go there and go through the classes and then go home. Do you see what I mean? As opposed to today where they stay up there, are there all the time, and maybe they have more chance to experience such things. But I think it's all in how you look at it.

She then revealed, without specifically stating so, that there were circumstances she had to “face” at the normal school.

I faced what my children didn't face. My older sisters and brothers faced what I didn't have to face as far as this business of people and their race is concerned, but I always felt you do what you do, I do what I do. If you don't want to be bothered with me, I don't want to be bothered with you. . . . I've always thought that way.

Norma '33 acknowledged that “there may have been some, but I don’t know anything about it. . . . I saw nothing that I would classify that way.” Her situation was different than most of the others, though, because she was often assumed to be Caucasian. Vernell '43 noted that “the only experience I had at Montclair that was a little bit unsettling” was in the lounge. She was dealing cards when in came “a very dark Italian gal”¹⁴⁹ who had recently returned from studying abroad.

Someone said, “My God, Tullia, you look just like a n—” I just dropped it. But the fact that they stopped and didn’t move forward said to me, “Well, it’s okay. I probably would have said something fresh and nasty myself in a different situation.” But that was the only thing, a little tiny vignette, that said to me that there were some people who had some prejudices. But I never—I can’t think of anybody in the school I didn’t like or who I felt did not like me.

When asked if other black students had experienced racist incidents, she replied:

Certainly Ralph [Jones] never told me about any. Tommy [Flagg] might have had a few kind of anecdotal bits, which he probably handled very well. Ruth [Hoppin] never mentioned anything. And I don’t remember the other two girls. Now, that does not mean there weren’t episodes in their own lives. . . . But not on the college campus.

Then she made a comment that would be echoed by several others: “I think I would have remembered.”

You don’t become a history person unless you have a great memory, and I don’t . . . remember any episode where anybody said— . . . It just wasn’t there. . . . I also think that blacks who came out of the ’30s tended not to be very threatening people. We weren’t angry, you see. Maybe we should have been, but we weren’t. We weren’t angry people and that might be that that made it much more palatable. . . . We were preoccupied. It would have been foolish for anybody to think about insulting . . . four black kids on campus when the world is being ripped apart and nobody knew when he was going to go.

Marilyn '46 could not “recall any incident as far as racial matters are concerned.”

When asked in another context if she knew of any racist incidents, she said:

¹⁴⁹ Vernell added regarding the other student, Tullia de Rogatis, “Oh, she was marvelous.” In fact, after graduating she was hired to teach French in College High School for at least one year according to official records.

There may have been, but I don't remember them now. . . . I think maybe at the time, whatever there may have been in the way of a racist attitude or climate, we just sort of ignored it or accepted it, because that was the thing, you know. You walked away from it, you know. It wasn't until the '60s that people began to really—when Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks, and that kind of thing, where people really began to make waves about any kind of racial attitudes that people would put upon them. . . . Our student days, no.

George '49 declared: "I don't remember a problem at Montclair, I'm happy to say. I loved it! I love it so much, even when I think of it now." When asked later about racist incidents in his own life or that of his classmates, he said:

If anything ever happened to me, I don't remember it, which would mean it probably just didn't happen. And if it happened to them and they related it, I can't remember. . . . I thought Montclair was pretty much without racial problems. There may have been individual students who may have had problems with instructors, but I don't really know.

Juanita '51 recalled "a student saying to me that I would never graduate. . . . I was offended by that." But aside from that,

I don't recall being really, you know, like ostracized or insulted or anything like that. As I said, maybe the age—we grew up after World War II, a time when people were trying to get along together. That may have had some influence on overt incidents. In terms of faculty members . . . if you did your work, you were okay.

She then revealed that she "never made racism an issue" and observed:

When you go to . . . a predominantly white college, there's no way you're going to succeed at the school if you're going to go around seeing racism every time you turn around. It just isn't going to work. . . . So I guess because I didn't look for it, I didn't find it. . . . A couple of things that happened that I thought well, you know, if I were white, this may not have happened. . . . Go with the flow, I guess.

I suggested that Juanita seemed to acknowledge racist incidents, but tried to ignore them or didn't dwell on them. She quickly answered: "I don't think there were any."

Frances '52 was asked if she had been singled out as the only black pupil in College High School. "No, no," she said. "I had never really had any experience with any kind of prejudice or being singled out and penalized, punished for being black.

There was one professor there, as I remember, with a southern background.¹⁵⁰ And I thought maybe there was a little tension there, but nothing that I would really—nothing overt.”

Gwen '53 was emphatic that no racial incidents had ever occurred with her or with anyone she knew on campus. However, she did describe the following event that happened far from campus as she traveled to Mexico to study Spanish one summer between semesters.

The first time I had ever bumped into real racism . . . [was] when I got on that bus and went out to St. Louis, Missouri, and we had to get out. And the first thing I saw was a neon sign blinking, “Colored Waiting Room.” I had never seen that before. In Boonton, we didn’t eat in the Sweet Shop or anything like that because we just knew we didn’t. It was unspoken. In the movies, we went in and we had to go sit upstairs; we couldn’t sit downstairs. And that was about all that I had ever bumped into in this area here, but nothing like the colored waiting room and having to sit in the back of the bus and all that kind of thing.

She had a photograph of herself from the front page of a Mexican newspaper, sitting with white friends at an assembly program in the college there with the caption: “Here she will be treated like everybody else. At home, she might not be able to sit with these friends. But here, she can sit with whomever she chooses.” But Gwen “wasn’t into all that stuff. I was a student and trying to have a good time.” Marilyn '46 had an experience similar to Gwen’s on a train ride to visit the relatives of Thelma A '44 in Virginia.

It was my first experience with Jim Crow—I mean, really structured Jim Crow, and segregated railroad cars and so forth, and I was scared stupid. I don’t know what I thought was going to happen. But anyway, Thelma’s mother, she said, “I know you don’t want to go to the dining room to eat.”

¹⁵⁰ This professor was *not* Eugene Link, who had been mentioned in a similar way by Marilyn.

They switched to a segregated train in Washington, DC, and ate box lunches prepared by Thelma A's mother, apparently to spare them the embarrassment of being turned away from the dining car. Once in Virginia, all was well.

Thelma's family had been established there for many, many years, and everybody knew them . . . blacks and whites knew them. . . . And I just had a marvelous time. I enjoyed it very much, and I don't recall that there were any incidents insofar as blacks and whites were concerned at that time. Not at all.

On the way back to New Jersey, once more they "had to change trains in DC . . . and I remember they had packed a lunch for us again."

In an earlier discussion of classroom experiences, Thelma C '53 had maintained: "I can't tell you any negative things because I either didn't know they happened or they just didn't happen." When asked later about specific racist incidents, she hedged just a bit: "I don't really have any that I remember. I've been trying to think. Maybe they were there, but I didn't recognize them. But I didn't certainly feel offended or felt as though I had to take a defensive stance. . . . I don't remember encountering anything."

Matthew '54 stated: "No teacher or student at Montclair ever, ever said anything to me that I would have considered a racial kind of remark or anything like that," and neither did he ever hear of such incidents happening to other students. "I can very honestly say to you I never once felt at Montclair as an undergraduate, that I can remember, any incident of a negative nature as far as race was concerned. But then, there were so few of us." Likewise, Joyce '56 said: "I can't remember any, to tell you the truth, and I think I would have remembered because it would have been unusual. . . . If other people had any problems, I am not aware of it. . . . The biggest thing, I would say, was the fact that they took so few of us."

Ethel B '57 "just didn't have time to sit around and conjecture things if they weren't there. And as I said, if they were sly and covert—you just didn't major on it. At

least I didn't." She added that she did not "want to glamorize it" or "say that everything was hunky-dory." However, she was brought up to think:

I'm the best there is and there's no one better than I am. I'm not better than anybody else; I'm the best there is of *me*. So therefore, if I'm the best there is of me, I don't have to worry what other people are doing or what other people are saying about me. I'm going to go on and focus on what I'm doing. . . . There might have been things going on and maybe because I didn't pay attention to them or they weren't something that were right there in front of me, and I'm trying to think if there was anything on campus that was racist. The only thing I can think of on campus that was racist was there were so *few* of us there! . . . There was no reason to act racially against us because who would pick on less than 15 people out of 200 or 300 or 500 students there? So I think we just got lost in the crowd. . . . There weren't a lot of us there, you know. . . . That may have been a deterrent as far as racism is concerned.

She could not think of "anything individual that was happening to anyone and you could say, boom! it was a racial thing." Even in examining her less-than-perfect grades and considering if they were the result of professorial racism, she had to admit: "I don't think that happened either."

Jeannette '59 answered the query about racist incidents by saying, "No, not that I recall." The "buts" were close behind.

And if it was there, it was probably subtle, by way of teachers and courses and that kind of thing, but it certainly wasn't open. . . . Montclair and Upper Montclair were not used to black people. We knew that. But they never openly showed me any direct discrimination. Maybe I was blind and didn't see, but I can't give you a testimony of being specifically— . . . As long as you come in and act like they act, you know, there was no problem . . . if you just fit in and did your work.

She did think that "the reluctance to accept NAACP was a kind of racial thing which they would never admit to, but it was their own ignorance as far as I was concerned about that."

Finally, Reuben '59 reflected that his campus job as a waiter "would have been a kind of interesting opportunity to get into a confrontation with mostly European American students, because I was basically the only African American student around.

And it never did. And I thought about that many times.” He continued that when he arrived at Montclair in 1954,

there wasn’t the contentiousness between races, you know, and the distrust . . . not as open as it is now. . . . I never felt any racism or any racism directed towards me. I didn’t hear any words being called in the dormitories or any on campus directed at African Americans or other people of color. I never heard that. So, now, to say that it didn’t go on? I wouldn’t know. . . . Even speaking to African Americans on campus at the time, I don’t remember them coming to me to say, “Oh, this person or another said this, you know, and I had to tell them off or whatever.”

He added that if, in a class, “someone said something at that time that I thought would have been racist, I think that I would have spoken out even then. But I didn’t hear that. I didn’t see it.” Other than possible unfair grades, “in terms of racism, I didn’t feel it as an undergraduate.” Then he considered the situation from the perspective of the present.

When the numbers of African Americans increase in certain places, . . . the dominant European society sort of, you know, feels threatened for some reason. . . . When I think back at it, I think that there was more racism than I saw. . . . Now when I think back as a truly mature adult and having had lots of experiences in lots of places, . . . that was a racist community that I was in at that time.

At the end of the interview, he offered yet another viewpoint. Racism “probably wasn’t as overt and I wasn’t as perceptive. . . . I’m not calling it ‘racist.’ But I’m saying that there is, there was, an aspect of what I felt was racism at Montclair during my tenure *as an administrator* there.”

The four white interviewees witnessed no overt racism on the MSTC campus. Audrey ’43 saw “not one” incident. “As far as I could see—there was nothing like that.” Then she added perceptively, “You know, that doesn’t mean it *wasn’t* there, and it probably means there weren’t enough African American students to be harassed.” Marie ’43 said there was “none that I heard about.” Irv ’49 answered, “no.” Moe ’49 at first replied, “No, and I would have known because I knew everyone.” When reminded that he had mentioned a couple of professors who might have been a bit unfair, he said: “Yes,

but nothing that you could really pin down.” Moe then described his excellent relationship with Tom when both men were on the Montclair faculty.

Well, of course, Tom and I insulted each other. At times I would say, “Tom, you know, you are a lazy nigger!” And he would look at me and he’d say, “Well, that’s all right. You’re a nigger turned inside out! You’re Irish.” And I would say we loved each other very dearly. Well, you don’t insult people like that unless you are very fond of one another. There are times when even the most offensive words are not offensive, when they’re said with the right tone and the right feeling.

Perhaps the most fitting conclusion to this summary of subjects’ comments on racism is one made by an African American woman—“not for attribution”—when the formal interview had ended. She said to the naïve white interviewer, “*Of course*, we all experienced ‘incidents.’” And she narrated two examples. But she, like the others, had worked out a personal philosophy to deal with such occurrences and proceeded to live a full and productive life.

Integration

The questions related to integration addressed the opportunity to be a full participant in the classroom; acceptance in the social life of the campus; a sense of community or belonging to a family; and assistance in locating a teaching position. The first two sets of questions were similar to some asked in the previous section dealing with institutional experiences and served as cross checks.

Fullness of Class Participation

Each of the 28 interviewees answered the question about how much opportunity they were given to be full participants in the classroom. The comments of all African American subjects were comparable, as shown in these typical responses: “Oh, as much as I wanted to!” (Ethel B). “I would say plenty” (Bernice). “A great deal” (Norma). “As

much as I wanted to. Nothing hindered me. . . . I was always encouraged by everyone” (Lillian). “I participated as fully as anybody could. I can’t think of anything that I wanted to do there that I didn’t do” (Vernell). “I felt always welcome to do that. . . . I felt free to voice my opinion. I never felt that I shouldn’t do it” (Patricia). “In the classes, there was no limitation on whatever you wanted to do. I participated in the class” (Thelma A).

Roberta reacted to the phrase “given an opportunity.” She explained that “it’s not a matter of being given an opportunity. I always just took it. And it was never a problem. I’ve always been a participant. . . . It never occurred to me not to participate.”

The white subjects echoed these thoughts when asked what they perceived to be the experiences of their black classmates. Audrey said, “I don’t think there was any discrimination whatsoever. They could be part of everything that went on.” Moe thought that “in most of the classes, they were just members.” And Marie stated that black students “participated in everything and were very well received.”

A few black subjects qualified their otherwise positive responses, but their reservations seem applicable to students of all races. Marilyn and George both said they could not be kept quiet in “classes that I liked.” (George did *not* like education courses.) Matthew noted that in many lecture classes, there was little chance for participation by anybody. And Ethel M indicated that “the only limits in participating in any activities, I would say, were the limits that I put on myself.” She credited Montclair with helping her mature from a “very insecure, quiet, fade into the woodwork person” into a more confident young woman who was comfortable in the role of teacher.

Frances, however, said that she could participate fully in her College High School classes “as long as I wasn’t socially involved or looking for a social involvement.” Thelma C hinted at another possibility in observing: “Yes, we were

called on frequently . . . and more than you would choose sometimes!” Joyce, three years behind Thelma C, concurred that “if you knew the material, you *had to*” participate. Her classmate, Howard, stated the matter bluntly:

When you were black in those days, you know, and you were maybe the only person in class, you sort of—you were put in a position where you had to speak many times simply because you were black. . . . I always let it be known that we’re just not one great monolithic group and that without question there was as much divergence within the black community as there was in the white community. So, after I laid that on the table enough times, they stopped fooling around with me.

Reuben, coming to Montclair two years after Howard, felt so free to participate in class that, as indicated in the previous section, he believed “if someone said something at that time that I thought would have been racist, I think that I would have spoken out even then.” However, he concluded, “But I didn’t hear that. I didn’t see it.” His classmate, Jeannette, agreed that African American students could participate in the classroom “as much as you wanted.” But she added:

Behind the scenes and in the teachers’ lounge or whatever, they probably had us labeled. You know, the good ones who would cater to them, they probably loved. The rest of us who weren’t looking for any special attention probably didn’t get it. But it was just a kind of a different time.

As if to confirm the cross check purpose of this question, Florence, the oldest subject who was a graduate of the Montclair State Normal School, noted astutely: “You’ve asked that question a different way several times. I had none of that feeling. I am outgoing. When I had something to say, I would participate.”

Acceptance in Campus Social Life

Responses to the question of how much acceptance African American students felt in the social life of the college ranged from “I did not feel socially accepted” (Gerry) to “Oh God, I felt complete acceptance”(George). On the whole, more black subjects’

comments could be classified as positive (13) than neutral (8) or negative (3), although categorization was difficult because some responses overlapped categories.

Among the white subjects, two were not able to hazard a guess as to the feelings of their black classmates. Of the remaining two white subjects, Audrey was confident that the sole African American in her class of 1943 “was totally accepted. And even now when we have our reunions, you know, she’s always part of people asking, ‘Who’s coming?’” When that subject herself (Vernell) was asked if she felt socially accepted, she answered as follows:

Oh, yes. You see, it was a different period. I grew up in the “one world.” . . . This was going to be a great world. Integration was the solution to the problem. We talk about multiculturalism now, but it was much more multicultural then, before the war. . . . We were highly political, but we thought it was a better world, we’d have a better world. . . . We thought that we were living together and we were liking everybody. . . . I think that most of the people at Montclair were like that. I don’t think that you’d find a bigoted person, because first of all, if you’re going to teach, you’re going to teach in a public school.

The fourth white subject, Moe, guessed “that they felt a little out of place because there were so few of them. It did not surprise me that they were a little reluctant to make overtures.” When asked if they would have been welcome to go to a dance, for example, he exclaimed, “Oh, yes, no question about that.” George, his African American classmate from 1949, was the person who declared, “Oh God, I felt complete acceptance.”

Several interviewees (including Irv – white) attributed their own less-than-full social life to commuter status. For instance, Thelma A said, “By being a commuting student, I didn’t have any social life with the others.” Even though she belonged to several clubs, “there wasn’t that much socializing involved.” Ethel B found it difficult to return to campus for dances, parties, or athletic events. “It was too much. A lot of commuting back and forth.” Gwen “just didn’t take part in it because, as I said, I was

either going to class or coming home.” Ethel M stated, “There wasn’t a whole lot of social life. . . . There weren’t a lot of parties or—maybe in the dorms, there were.”

Vernell said, “Remember again, I’m the commuter. If I’d lived in the dormitory, I might have had a little different” experience.

Similar to Roberta’s reaction to the earlier phrase “given an opportunity to be a full participant,” Ethel B declared that the word

“acceptance” rings a negative with me because then it says, well, were you not accepted because you were black or were you accepted because you were black? And I say, “Well, why do I have to be accepted because I’m black or I’m not black?” As I said before, there was never an issue of being accepted or not accepted. It was what I wanted to do, and since I didn’t want to participate in the social life of the college, it was never an issue. You know, if I wanted to, I don’t know if I would have been rejected.

Katherine, Marilyn, Thelma C, and Jeannette voiced comparable thoughts about their *choice* not to be a more active part of the social scene. Katherine said, “I didn’t bother attending the meetings of some of the social clubs that they had. No, as I say, I spent time at home during the weekends, so I wasn’t on campus to participate.” (However, she did participate in many academic clubs.) Marilyn and Thelma C were quite positive in their overall assessments of social acceptance, but amplified their responses. Marilyn said, “Where blacks were accepted, okay. If they weren’t, we went on our own way and left them alone and they left us alone.” Thelma C said her level of acceptance was “fine” but added: “I guess they wondered why we probably didn’t participate more. . . . I think we were doing other things.” And Jeannette observed:

Generally blacks did what they wanted to do and whites did what they wanted to do, but all the invitations were open. . . . If you wanted to go, you could go. Chances are you probably wouldn’t particularly want to go, particularly if the dancing was different. . . . But I don’t think it was thought of, “I can’t go” or “I won’t go.” It’s just that we’d have something else to do.

In general, subjects who lived in the residence halls were more positive than those who commuted. Juanita reported: “I went to the proms and we did everything like

that. . . . Whatever social life there was, if we had special things, I would go.” She

“forged close bonds” with both black and white students. Bernice offered this comment:

In the dorm, complete acceptance. I mean, I’m sure there were some girls that probably were— . . . Most of them lived out . . . in areas where if there was any black, there was one or two, and they certainly had never interacted. So I think they were fascinated with us! . . . We became so tight with the big group of girls—that Joyce and Nonnie and that whole bunch who would have been, what would be considered the leaders—we were really a part of that group. . . . In the dorm, I’m talking about.

Lillian felt completely accepted in the campus social life. Only one dormitory resident, Joyce, expressed less than full acceptance, and her explanation was: “I went home every weekend, and that was when a lot of the social things went on.” She raised the possibility that in anticipating some level of rejection, she avoided it by not being present. “I’m curious about whether I went home because I wasn’t fitting in, you know? . . . I would suspect that that’s why I went home—part of the reason I went home was because socially there wasn’t anything for me.”¹⁵¹

In addition to the enthusiastic George, other African American commuters were quite positive about their social acceptance. Marilyn stated: “I felt accepted because, as I keep saying, there was a very small enrollment at the time. The teachers were very cordial, very friendly, and very accepting of us—of the black students in general, that is.” Although Matthew professed not to be part of the social scene in the college as a whole, with his smaller group of (mostly white) friends he felt “total acceptance.” He added, “I went to their homes; they came to my home. They stayed here; I stayed at their homes. If we had something that was at night, I would stay at one of their homes.” Howard observed, “I was very accepted . . . as much as I wanted and as much as I could

¹⁵¹ Yet, according to Roberta, “Joyce Ashley was very active. She was a little busy beaver in everything. As I said, people were crazy about her. I remember her more than anyone else.”

participate. . . . When you were ‘an athlete,’ things were usually made much easier for you.” He was “absolutely” sure that being an athlete paved the way for him socially.¹⁵² But regarding his membership in an otherwise white fraternity, he felt “accepted as I was going to be. . . . They were my friends, most of them were athletes, and so, you know, it’s just a carryover kind of relationship.” Howard sensed the invisible line beyond which acceptance was not going to be offered and seemed philosophically prepared for that fact.

Two African American females from the later years under study expressed the dawning of an awareness not stated so explicitly by the others. According to Patricia, she felt free in the activities with which she was involved. However, “there are things I might not have been aware of or things that might have gone on that I really didn’t know about.” Jeannette observed:

I think sometimes people can come into a situation with a chip on their shoulder. I don’t think we were, shall we say, intelligent enough to have that chip? We didn’t see it. . . . Probably, if we had really known what was going on behind the scenes, we would have had reason to rebel and be upset about it. So there were probably a lot of things going on in a subtle way, but we were not sensitized to it. I don’t know whether that is to our credit or not. We might have overlooked a lot of things.

Note the same language used by her classmate, Reuben, in the previous section: “I didn’t see it.” In the late 1950s, they were on the cusp of the civil rights movement. In retrospect, they suspected racism. But at the time, they were only subconsciously aware of it, if at all.

¹⁵² Alma and Vernell, neither of whom was an athlete herself, made the same claim. Alma said, regarding her husband, Tom: “Tom had a very, very wide and rich experience because he had not only his classroom experiences and the lab experiences associating with his fellow science majors, but because he was an athlete he had many other associations.” Moe (white), who *was* an athlete, agreed: “Negro students—that was the word then—seemed to fit in very nicely. And I know they fit in well athletically, both in track and in football.” In fact, Tom was one of a handful of students singled out by name in the 1940 yearbook: “To the long list of Montclair’s athletic victories Tom Flagg added record-breaking performances in track” (25).

Alma, a graduate student in the early 1940s, seemed to be much more cognizant of incomplete social acceptance, at least in hindsight. But she brushed off her knowledge by saying: “You know, it was so expected and so common that it wasn’t worth remarking, that you weren’t a part of someone else’s social life.” Even earlier, in the 1930s, Norma also “had a feeling that I might not be welcome, so I remained on the social periphery. I guess you’d say that was my fault—a defense mechanism.” Roberta likewise took some blame on herself by explaining that although she felt free in the classroom, “I’m far more introverted socially.” Similarly, Frances “felt accepted up to a point, and I drew a line, too. I did not spend a lot of time on the telephone talking to my high school classmates. If I was on the phone at night, it was my black friends.” However, “if there was an in-group, I was in the in-group.” Jeannette summed up the topic of social acceptance with the following observation that refers specifically to faculty members:

I don’t think anybody was interested in how you felt socially within the group or whether you were comfortable. I don’t think they cared whether you had a problem at home. That was your business. Their business was to teach and your business was to learn. I don’t think we stressed interpersonal relations with black or white at that time.

Community/Family Belonging

Participants were asked if they had a sense of belonging to a community or family on campus and, if so, in what specific ways it seemed so. Of the 26 people who answered this question, only three indicated frankly that they felt no such sense of community or family. Katherine said, “No, not in particular.” Thelma A replied, “No, uh-uh.” And Ethel B said simply, “No.”

On the positive side, subjects offered comments such as the following from Juanita: “I felt that I was part of the Montclair State experience when I was there. . . . I

did not feel isolated from anyone—not at all.” Reuben said, “A human family, it was. I mean, I think people legitimately had fun together on campus. . . . It was just a fun place and enjoyable place to be.” He added that “it was small, it was intimate, and I would imagine that if one wanted to shut someone out, it was very easy to do.” However, in his experience that shutting out did *not* happen. Patricia reported, “I felt very much at home. I really did. Maybe I’m numb, but I felt very much at home.” And George said firmly: “Absolutely.” He was confident that Theresa David, an African American student from the class of 1946 who was unable to participate in the interviews, “would tell you the same thing. We felt absolutely just more at home.” Thelma C had a different take:

Certainly it was comfortable and I guess I was nurtured. . . . Sometimes you’re nurtured by, you know, people just being there . . . and not creating a negative field around you, so that I don’t know if people really went out of their way [to include black students in the community].

The absence of an overt “negative field” was sufficient to generate her positive feelings.

Vernell believed there was a strong sense of community emanating from the simple fact of being one of the chosen few accepted as Montclair students. “Absolutely, because you were there.” She said that “it wasn’t a matter of having bright kids and then not-so-bright kids. They were all pretty equal. . . . I can’t remember any moment where I felt hmm, wow. I never did.” Vernell then used the phrase “so few of us” that was repeated by 14 other subjects of both races in various contexts throughout the interviews.

Now, of course, there’s one thing . . . that almost all black people believe, and that is where there are a few, there’s no problem. . . . How are you going to have a problem? . . . There were four of us, so there were never more and we weren’t . . . threatening, and there weren’t men around so we didn’t have the competition or—you know, the interracial dating or anything like that.

Among the 23 people who responded affirmatively to the question of community or belonging, 14 qualified their responses by saying the family feeling came from being part of a smaller group rather than the college as a whole. The groups that were named

included classes, major departments, athletic teams, student organizations, fraternities, and residence hall friends. “You had a sense of belonging to a class,” said Vernell. “Or you were the history majors, or you were the band. I don’t think that you had a sense of just being Montclair kids. I think it was more in groups.” Matthew said:

Social studies majors were a group and were probably a lot closer together than a lot of real families are today. . . . I would say there was that camaraderie, that feeling of belonging to the group . . . that sort of drew you together as a group—studying together and playing together.

“The Math Department was a family. But it was a very small segment of the college,” said Gerry. The Spanish majors, too, were “very cohesive,” and the professor “made sure if you didn’t know your stuff then you were out of there” in the words of Gwen. For Irv (white), the community was composed “of science major fellow students.” Alma thought “the closest thing would be . . . counseling groups” at Newark State Teachers College, where she did her undergraduate work. Audrey (white) observed, “We all had our own little major group. . . . And then I think the professors did a great deal to make us feel part of a community.” She attributed the positive environment to “the faculty and the staff” and added, “I don’t think there was much homesickness. We were just at ease.”

Lillian exclaimed, “Absolutely. The Speech [Department] family was the best. . . . I think it was sort of unique because we were so small. . . . We had four professors to ourselves! It was fabulous!” In the words of Bernice, “Yes, very much so. I felt that I was really a part. . . . You interacted with people in your classes, but you didn’t basically interact with people who were not in your department. It was very cliquish department-wise.” Thelma C acknowledged, “I was very comfortable here. . . . Many times it was departmentalized. . . . I think that being the same major sort of drew people together.” Roberta put it this way:

Very much so, yes. . . . I just enjoyed everyone else. They were just so friendly. We were all in the same boat. I think that may have been the reason for keeping majors together. We were mutually supportive in our fields and I think that was why. It limited our contacts, but it certainly helped us, at least in getting started.

Norma said she felt part of the community “academically, but not socially” and explained that “the people I was very close to were my classmates in Latin class and members of Kappa Delta Pi.” Howard also credited his Greek organization with providing a feeling of belonging and added that “as an athlete, I knew I was” part of a community or family. He related that “the football team was stoned down in [Newport News, VA] because of myself and another young man on the team.” Although his teammates and other students “didn’t talk that much” about this and similar incidents after they happened, he felt “oh, without question” that they supported him. Likewise, Alma reported on behalf of her husband, Tom: “With him, it would be both his majors and his fellows on the track team. . . . There’s teamwork and it’s just necessary. . . . So it’s sort of built-in. . . . It was very, very special. I just loved to hear him talk about it.”

Joyce said, “I must have felt very good about it. I certainly belonged to a lot of things.” She surmised that “probably Players would be a substitute family.” Players, the drama club, consisted mainly of her fellow majors and minors in English and social studies along with speech majors. For other participants, their small group comprised their friends. Marilyn reported that “the black friends that I made there” gave her a sense of community—“not [the college] as a whole, no.” Ethel M said, “My little group of friends . . . I felt very comfortable with this little group. They were my family, and I think we all felt that way in the group.” Frances, the only black pupil in College High School, answered the question about having a sense of community by saying, “Yes, I think so.” She indicated that “there was a lot of school spirit. We had cheerleaders and, as I said, I was a cheerleader.” However, in the matter of true friends, she concluded:

I knew that I couldn't trust that if it came down to an issue of me against them—that they were going to go for themselves and leave me out there by myself, you know, very hurt. Because my friends didn't back me up when I really needed them, and it's something that I knew.

Three subjects specifically mentioned the residence hall experience providing a sense of community or family. Juanita said:

I think there's quite a difference in relationship between the individuals and the institution where one commutes, because [commuters] don't form certain kinds of relationships. . . . In an undergraduate experience where you live on campus there's a family life . . . in addition to the academic side. And so I think probably the residential experience had everything to do with the sense of belonging that I had. . . . If you're . . . a residential student for four years, . . . you form some relationships, you make some friends, or else I would suspect you'd be a very, very lonely person for a long time. You wouldn't stay.

(She indicated that Gloria Vaughan Curry—the only other black student in her class—was a commuter but had “a very gregarious personality and she also felt she belonged.”)

Thelma C likewise thought that dormitory life contributed to building community. “In the dorm, if there was a need, you know, you automatically” helped your colleagues.

And Jeannette said her small group of resident friends “knew each other's parents . . . in that sense, it was like family.”

One of the white participants, Moe, was asked if he thought black students felt themselves to be members of the MSTC community. He responded, “I think so. I know George Harriston did. He was accepted as one of us.” (George himself had answered by saying, “Absolutely.”) Moe also indicated that Luther Harrington, a black fellow athlete from the class of 1949, “was one of us.”

Assistance in Locating Job

Twenty-seven interviewees responded to the question about assistance in finding a teaching position. (The College High School pupil, of course, did not.) Fourteen of them knew there was a campus placement office to assist graduates in locating jobs.

These included all the white participants, three of whom had used the office's services while the fourth said: "I wasn't given any assistance." The remaining 13 subjects either did not know such a service was available or were unsure of its existence.

In 1922, Principal Chapin had established a "bureau of appointments" that relied on faculty assistance to place students, and in 1930 Principal Sprague moved the placement service into the Integration Department (Davis 117-118, *Pelican* 3/13/31). But the earliest black graduates in this study took it for granted that no such services would be open to them. Florence '28 said she had not gone to the placement office. "Perhaps I felt it wouldn't be of any need. You know how the wind is blowing, so you go with it." Katherine '34 stated that there was "a very active placement bureau, yes, indeed." Then she related:

Because of my racial identity, I became a "problem" at the placement bureau at Montclair because at that time you know what the situation was and only three cities—Newark, Paterson and Jersey City—admitted Negro—well, were favorable to allowing teachers in their school system. In the suburbs, it was a barrier.

When Alma '43 (MA) was asked what assistance she and her husband Tom '40 were given in finding teaching positions, she declared with a laugh of amazement: "Zero! Zero!" She did not think there was a placement office on campus to which they could have gone for help. When Vernell '43 was asked the same question, she responded "none whatsoever." She did not remember any placement office and said: "But, you see, who would have placed me? You know, why would they place me? High schools just weren't doing that kind of thing." I asked, "Meaning hiring black teachers?" Yes, she replied, and added: "I think that Tom was different. Tom was a superb athlete. He came from Newark. He was a very amiable guy, and he was an athlete, and they'll hire an athlete before they'll hire a history teacher, so we thought."

Thelma A '44 knew there was a placement office, but "I got nothing. I got no assistance there." Then she reconsidered: "Maybe that's how I learned about teacher placements, from there. I don't know." And Marilyn '46 stated, "As far as I can recall, there was nothing at the school, at the college, that was of any help whatsoever." Ethel M '48 thought there was a placement office, "and I may have been a little at fault at not trying harder to get them to help me." George '49 expressed a sentiment typical of black students who did know such an office existed: "I didn't go to it. . . . I don't know anybody who went through the placement office. . . . Maybe they did, but I'm not aware of it."

Among African American graduates of the 1950s, there was not a great deal more awareness or usage than in the earlier years. Juanita '51 puzzled, "I'm trying to think if there was something called a placement office then. It certainly didn't do a very good job placing me!" She saw an advertisement for a job at an all-white school. Apparently without seeking the advice of a placement officer, she "naïvely went over and applied for the job in Leonia. I did not get it. . . . Oh boy, oh boy! What a shock when I walked in! . . . I guess they didn't expect a black graduate would come in from Montclair." She decided to return to her hometown of Atlantic City, where she was assured of a position without the college's assistance.

Joyce '56 reflected, "I suppose there was a placement office. I may have gone to it. I don't remember. Isn't that strange? I don't remember." Lillian '57 said there was a placement office. "I don't think I needed it, but I think we all knew—" Lillian was one of five African American interviewees who were sympathetic to the plight of the placement office because high school teaching jobs were scarce. She knew that in her discipline, speech, the few people who held positions were not giving them up. Ethel M '48 said, "There weren't a lot of them available to *anybody*." Jeannette '59 went so far as

to say that the placement office was “very helpful to everybody. But there again, when you’ve got 100 students graduating, you know, and what—10 openings? Few are going to get them.”

However, Matthew ’54 had the opposite experience, which he attributed to his dual certification in secondary and elementary. “If you could breathe and could stand on one leg, you could teach in those days because there was such a shortage of teachers,” he declared. “A person who had the kind of certification I had was in full demand because, you know, they could place me anywhere they wanted to.” As it turned out, he did not need to test his assumption. In fact, he said, “I never applied for any position. I was never interviewed. . . . I just went to talk to the superintendent [in my hometown] and got the job.” The superintendent had been a principal when Matthew was a pupil in the Hackettstown school.

Other black graduates also seemed to be in the right place at the right time for securing a satisfactory teaching position. Gwen ’53 thought there might have been a placement office for students who needed it, “but I can’t say that for certain. . . . I had no contact with it.” She reported, “When I was practice teaching [in my hometown], the principal said, ‘There’s an opening here, Gwen. You can have it next year.’ That was it.” Patricia ’56 said, “I didn’t really need any assistance because I knew the superintendent and then he knew my professors. . . . When my practice teaching ended, the teacher said, ‘Well, now we’ll have to make room for you, Pat.’ And they did.” Both Gwen and Patricia lived and taught in Boonton, a nearly all-white small town.

Gerry ’53 said that although “high school jobs were few and far between, the staff from my high school saw that I got a job in the Newark schools.” And Roberta ’57, who graduated midyear, needed to expend no effort at all in finding employment. “My elementary school had an assistant principal [who] took an interest in me.” Knowing that

a colleague in the system needed to fill a position midyear, he called the other man who in turn called Roberta. She accepted the position with reluctance, having looked forward to half a year's respite before entering the teaching profession.

Six interviewees who did not use the college's placement office nonetheless received help from individual faculty members. Katherine '34, who had been a "problem" for the college's placement office, applied for positions in her hometown, "but there weren't any openings in Newark." She was one of a handful of exchange students who had spent an extra school year abroad and "the high schools in New Jersey were anxious to have them on their faculty. They just grabbed them up! But I knew that I would not be accepted in [other communities outside Newark], so I didn't even think of applying." Her favorite professor, Margaret Holz, "came to my rescue. She contacted the General Education Board, the Rockefeller Foundation, and they were able to send me to Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia" where she taught French.

Norma '33 said she was "sure I would have remembered" being interviewed by a campus placement office if it had occurred. Having no such recollection, she concluded there was no official placement assistance—at least for her. "I think because of my racial identity, they knew that there weren't any openings for me, so that was that. They wished me well. They wished me Godspeed, and that was that." However, a professor, Walter Freeman, helped "to groom me for the . . . Washington, DC examination."

George '49 also was assisted by Dr. Freeman, although the professor's plan backfired.

I got in touch with Walter Freeman and he sent me out on a Latin job up in Westwood. . . . I went up to Westwood and they sort of looked at me strangely. I didn't get the job. . . . I went up because Dr. Freeman said there was a job there. And Dr. Freeman was from New England and he would never imagine that they would not hire me.

Another professor, Edwin Fulcomer, then referred George to an administrator in Elizabeth. "I went down and saw him and he said, 'When an opening comes, I sure will

keep you in mind.’ And he did. So I did get help from the college—from individual professors at the college.”

A second faculty member who helped at least two African American students was Ernest Fincher. When he asked Thelma C ’53 if she had found a job, she said, “‘Not a solid lead.’ So he made a phone call and I went to Elizabeth for the interview, and I got the job.” Likewise, concerning placement assistance, Ethel B ’57 related:

From the college as a whole, none. From Dr. Fincher, much assistance from him as an individual. . . . [When he] found out that I didn’t have a teaching position, he was very dismayed and he’s the one that reached out to the assistant superintendent.

She remembered the function of the placement office as being limited to putting job postings on a board and leaving it up to students to follow through.

Bernice ’53 received a financial loan from a professor, Maurice Moffatt, for a train trip to Cleveland, where she was interviewed and offered a job. Information about the position, however, came not from the professor but from networking with a black acquaintance who was already teaching in that city.

Other black subjects mentioned some form of networking as their means for landing a teaching job. When Florence ’28 graduated, she relied on word-of-mouth referrals. One of her sisters had graduated from the Montclair State Normal School in 1918. “I had friends. Many of my sister’s friends were in education. If they heard of anything, they’d let me know.” In addition, the daughter of her pastor was teaching in Camden, a city in south Jersey, and heard about an opening in the nearby black borough of Lawnside. “So I wrote and they asked me to come down. . . . When I got there, I found out they had two openings, one for the fourth grade and one for the sixth grade, so

I immediately told one of my friends.” Her friend was Mary Womble, the only other black graduate of the normal school class of 1928. Both women were hired.¹⁵³

The experience of Juanita ’51 was related earlier. When she was unsuccessful in securing a position in white north Jersey towns, she finally relied on her hometown network in Atlantic City. Reuben ’59 was sent by the placement office to interviews in north Jersey towns such as West Orange, Wood-Ridge, and Tenafly.

And one place said, “Well, no, Mr. Johnson, we’ve never had any African American students in this school.” So I said, “I’m not looking for African American students in this school. I’m looking for a job as a science teacher because I’ve been trained as a science teacher.” And then he said, “You know, we’ve never had any African American families in this town.” So I recall repeating myself. But when I came back to Montclair and told the story to the person in the placement office . . . basically what he said, “I suggest that you go where your own people are.” So that’s when I said to myself that no one would ever have to say that to me again. And that’s when I went to Newark. . . . One of the persons that was there was in the class of ’58, and I was ’58 and a half! [He graduated midyear, which was technically in 1959.] So, as soon as a position became available, he called me and said, “There’s a job.”

Vernell ’43 attempted to network in her hometown, but was disappointed.

My expectation in January of ’43 was to give myself a month and I would, come hell or high water, because I was a good student and I was a good teacher—at least I thought I was—I would have a job in the Elizabeth system. And one of the women who was a big shot in the junior high where I taught . . . rallied everybody around. “Oh, please call Vernell McCarroll. She did, you know, a good job with the student teaching. Call her.” I wasn’t called; I wasn’t called; I wasn’t called. I’d do a day here; maybe a day here. From January to June, I may have taught 20 days, and there were a couple of black physicians who tried to put pressure on them. But see, that was a different period. It wasn’t that they didn’t want me. They didn’t know me, and they weren’t willing—and maybe it’s because it’s the middle of the year, too, in all fairness. You know, how are you going to absorb this person?

¹⁵³ Similarly, Ruth Earley ’35 (a black alumna who was not a formal interviewee) located her first teaching position through a friend who had graduated from Wilberforce University and was offered two jobs in South Carolina. The friend accepted one and urged Ruth to take the other (telephone conversation on 8/24/97).

Jeannette '59 faced incidents similar to Juanita's and Reuben's while job-hunting in north Jersey. She went on two memorable interviews in white towns, to which she believes she was referred through the college's placement office.

I remember receiving a phone call and was asked to come for an interview. And in that day when you were interviewed, you wore heels, you wore a hat, you had gloves, and your handbag, and you were dressed "appropriately" for this interview.¹⁵⁴ And the man was encouraging me: "Please come up." So I did, and I walked through the door and I said, "I'm Jeannette Allen, and I'm here for an interview." And he said, "Oh." Then he started giving me all the negative reasons as to why I wouldn't want to teach in this particular school [Pascack Valley]. . . . A friend of mine did get the job. . . . She could get the job because she was white.

The second incident occurred in Weehawken. "My father drove me for that interview." While she was inside, he waited in the car. "In five minutes the police were there asking him who he was, where he was going, why he was there, etc. . . . I never heard any more about that interview, but I wouldn't want it, anyway."

Ethel B '57 also "had a couple of bad experiences." After applying for a position at a regional high school in Union County:

I talked on the telephone and the person said, "Well, come on down, come on in." . . . I think the appointment was about 9:00 in the morning, and I went there maybe at 8:30, quarter to nine, and the secretary told me the job was filled already! So, of course, I went to the DAD, the Division Against Discrimination, and charged them with discrimination. And, of course, I couldn't even charge them. They said, "Well, you know, she could come back and have an interview." It was very curious. 9:00 on a Monday morning the job was already taken!

The unpleasant experience was repeated in Montclair.

The clerk told me that I couldn't even apply—this was Montclair Public Schools—I couldn't even apply to be a per diem teacher there. So I went to the DAD on that also. The result was the same thing: that I could come in, you

¹⁵⁴ The importance of dress was suggested by two other subjects. Ethel B, designated as a "neat dresser" in her college yearbook, clearly remembered dressing for an interview "in this green-and-white polka dot dress. It had the jacket to go with it. It was like, I think, a coat dress." And Thelma A admired certain high school teachers because "they were well dressed and things of that sort, you know, and that impressed me." A white normal school student also remembered the dusty rose colored dress her mother helped her to make for graduation and her first teaching interview.

know, there was a mistake. I could come and apply to be a per diem teacher in Montclair, but in the meantime I was still . . . trying to get into Newark.

Given these belittling experiences, I asked some of the subjects if it was understood that there were certain schools to which they should not even bother applying. Alma, who graduated in 1940 from Newark State before entering Montclair for her master's degree, replied, "No, nothing was understood and nothing like that was ever discussed. So you wanted a job, you just had to say, 'Well, let's see, where shall I apply?'" Although she felt free in applying anywhere she pleased, teachers never notified her of openings. "Nothing like that ever happened." Lillian '57 concurred. "Did I interact with any persons saying, 'I need a job; will you help me?' No." However, when asked if there was any sense among black students that they would not be employed in a particular school district, she responded, "Probably so. . . . [In Clark, an all-white town,] I just knew that there would be no applications accepted for black teachers." But although "Rahway had a reputation for being not a particularly welcome place for blacks," she was hired to become the third African American faculty member in the district. "Rahway may have had issues, but I didn't have those issues. They just were not visited upon me."

Four interviewees asserted that political assistance was required to secure a good teaching job in certain locations. Howard '56 believed Newark "had tests that were geared to manipulate the process. . . . You had to be politically connected to get in." According to Marilyn '46, "the thing was to get a politician interested in you. They would help you get a job." She wanted to remain in the Newark area to keep her living expenses down, although she knew she "could have gotten a job in the South or even in DC. . . . But I said no, I didn't want to do that." Jeannette '59 believed she "could have

gotten a job immediately in Jersey City because the politicians were looking for black people.” However, she said, “I didn’t want to get a job because I was black particularly.”

The fourth person who mentioned the advantage of political help was Norma ’33, in the context of different but related questions in the section on “Outcome.” As noted earlier, she had no assistance from the placement office but knew “that there were Afro-American teachers in Jersey City. I knew some of them.” In fact, she had selected Jersey City for practice teaching with the hope of getting a job there.

But it didn’t do me any good, because I wasn’t a Democrat and neither was daddy and neither was my mother. . . . If you had the proper political connections, it didn’t hurt. Let’s put it that way. . . . At that period of time, political affiliation was important.

Two subjects mentioned that they went to outside teacher placement agencies to find jobs, but for different reasons. Thelma A ’44 saw no hope of teaching in New Jersey and the agency obtained a position for her in a black school in Maryland. Ethel M ’48—who could pass for white—believed that the scarcity of work in New Jersey for *anyone* would keep her unemployed. In her case, a teaching agency located a position in Delaware.

All of the interview was conducted on the phone, and I was hired. . . . [My] godmother . . . said, “Do they know that you’re Negro?” And I said, “I don’t know.” . . . She said, “Ethel, do not go down there without getting this cleared up, because it could be very, very uncomfortable for you.” . . . She felt that I was going into enemy territory, and let’s face it, it was south of the Mason-Dixon line. . . . I made that phone call and told them; and of course, they didn’t want me after that.

This experience was reminiscent of the recent practice teaching affair. In looking back, she reflected that it would have been better and bolder to arrive in Delaware, sign the contract, and see what happened. Yet she maintained that the problem in her own state of New Jersey was not race-based. “That’s how I saw it at the time.”

But results for the three white students who used the placement office were markedly different from most of those experienced by black students. The placement officer spoke to school superintendents on behalf of Irv '49, told Moe '49 about a better position even though he already had a tentative job, and sent Audrey '43 out "for all kinds of interviews." All of them easily found positions. In fact, Audrey "had seven offers before graduation"! (The fourth white student, Marie, did not request assistance from the placement office because she believed they were more interested in helping men and other "types" of women. She taught only from November through June following her graduation.)

Goals and Commitments (II)

In this section, the questions addressed changes in career goal (if any), consideration of transferring to another college, changes in outside commitments, and information on other black students who dropped out without completing the program at Montclair. The last question was important in discerning why some African American students did not reach their original goal of earning a degree since all the interviewees were graduates despite a concerted effort to interview dropouts.

Change in Career Goal

Only one of the respondents did not say "no" in some form to a question about whether they changed their intention to become a teacher during the course of study. Katherine exclaimed, "Oh, no, no second thought." Ethel M said, "I really wanted to be a teacher." Matthew stated, "Not at all. I was focused in becoming a teacher and wanted to get into the classroom." Bernice reflected, "Once I got involved in the teacher

education, I never really doubted that I was going to teach, at least for a few years. I never dreamed I'd teach 38 years!"

The only one who indicated a change of intention was Howard, who described himself as "the kind of person that I have plan A and plan B." Plan A was to be a physical education teacher and coach. But he started out at MSTC under plan B, declaring a science major "with the thought in the back of my mind . . . that I would go on and become a doctor." However, the change he made was actually to go with plan C—teaching social studies and coaching—rather than to proceed with either original plan.

Nevertheless, some subjects qualified their "no" responses. Joyce had an interest in clothing design or interior decorating, but became steadfast in her goal of teaching once she had enrolled at MSTC. Two people had post-graduation second thoughts about a teaching career. Marie (white) said, "I was not a good teacher and I myself realized that that was not for me." She went into educational administration after teaching less than a year. After doing engineering research in the summer following her first year of teaching, Audrey (white) had misgivings for financial and professional reasons. "But I really couldn't give up the classroom. I really loved the kids!" She remained.

Two people returned to an earlier theme. Thelma A observed with a trace of regret, "What else was there?" And Patricia, who had experienced no change of intention during her college career or for many years thereafter, pondered: "As I look back now, I'm not sure that that's what I should have done, that I should have been so rigid, and determined in that fashion. I'm not sure." She realized that "there weren't that many opportunities for black students at that time"; yet, "I'm not sure that is truly what I should have done."

A final note in this section concerns Marilyn, who entered the college with the intention *not* to teach but simply to earn a degree. Indeed, that plan was fulfilled when she could not locate a teaching position and became a librarian.

Transfer

Only two participants said they had entertained thoughts of transferring to another institution. Ethel M stated:

After two years, I really thought seriously of transferring and I wanted to go far away. . . . And I actually . . . sent for applications, I remember, from [the University of] Iowa because somehow I had heard that that was a good school for teaching. But I'm not even sure if I filled out the application. I knew that I couldn't swing it financially, so I stayed here.

Her reason for desiring a transfer was the glamour of being away from home—the dream of what college was “supposed” to be like.

The second person who considered transferring was Bernice. “At one point I was thinking that maybe I could shift over and go to Temple. I don't remember why I wanted to do that. I thought about it, but I didn't. I mean, I didn't follow through on it.”

Most interviewees harbored no desire to transfer. Lillian declared, “There was no time at which I would have even entertained the idea of transferring to another institution.” Juanita said, “From Montclair? No, I really never did.” Norma stated, “No, I was so happy here—no.” And Jeannette responded, “No. I was very happy once I got to live in the dormitory.” She added, “At that time Montclair was considered, I think, the best education center in the state.”

Katherine appeared shocked by the question. “Oh, no, I never thought of transferring. Transferring from the French Department at Montclair?!” And she laughed with amazement at the idea.

Change in Outside Commitments

Many subjects worked at jobs both on and off campus, but only a few recalled significant changes in outside commitments during their student years. Irv (white) indicated that “as my lab assistant responsibilities increased I decreased my outside work in family business.” Ethel M remembered that her mother had visited relatives in Jamaica for a few months. As the sole remaining female in a household of father and four brothers, she was “required to cook and do the things that [my mother] did, but I enjoyed it. It gave me a real feeling of accomplishment.” And Matthew, in addition to working with his father, did substitute teaching in his hometown when he was not in class at Montclair.

Thelma C said that she and others who were employed stopped working during their practice teaching. “You didn’t have the time.” But in general, outside obligations remained steady during the course of the subjects’ college years.

African American Dropouts

Only six subjects specifically remembered black students who began but did not finish at Montclair State. Florence ’28 knew someone from the shore area who lived at the YWCA and left after one year to marry a Montclair man. “She thought it more important to get married at the time rather than go to school, so she didn’t bother,” said Florence. “She was quite a worker in the community” and they were able to educate their children well.¹⁵⁵ Ethel M ’48 knew one of her classmates was African American because

¹⁵⁵ Official records confirm that the student was at the normal school 1924-25.

their families were friendly, “but he obviously didn’t want anyone to know and he was passing.” He dropped out after one year.¹⁵⁶

Bernice ’53 mentioned the names of two women, one of whom left after two years, she believed, to get married.¹⁵⁷ She speculated regarding the other, a music major, “It might have been money. It might have been some other things.”¹⁵⁸ Thelma C ’53, a classmate of Bernice, also recalled some black freshmen coming into the dormitory lounge where she and her friends were knitting and talking.

We would try to get them to do their work and to go and study, and they would sit there. . . . Well, many of them flunked out. They were there just about a year, some of them, so I guess they weren’t really prepared. . . . They were wasting a lot of time in the dorms. . . . The three that I remember were black students.

Patricia ’56 said, “Yes, there were a number. . . . Basically, they dropped out if they became interested in marriage.” And Lillian ’57 remembered two black women who entered with her class in 1953 and roomed together on campus. She believed they both left after a year or less—one because she “academically just couldn’t handle it” and “was drawn to home issues and problems,” and the other because she was “terribly homesick” for her family in Virginia. “She was in the wrong place. Her grades were suffering; she was just not happy.”¹⁵⁹ When Bernice was asked if she had any sense that racial incidents had caused some black students to leave, she said: “I never heard anything like that.”

No additional subjects knew of African American dropouts, although two more were identified through other sources. One left the college after a year because of “low

¹⁵⁶ Official records confirm that he left after one year due to “low scholarship.”

¹⁵⁷ Bernice’ memory was nearly correct. The student did leave and marry, but it was after one year (1950-1951) rather than two. Although she was located, regrettably she was unavailable for an interview.

¹⁵⁸ The records reveal that the second student also was on campus for one year in 1950-51, when Bernice was a sophomore. She returned to Montclair in 1977 and completed her degree in home economics in 1982. Unfortunately, she is no longer living.

¹⁵⁹ Lillian was quite accurate except that the first student actually stayed for two years. The official reason for the withdrawal of both students was “low scholarship.”

record” and the other left the normal school after just a month for unknown reasons.

Female interviewees, other than those noted above who identified specific dropouts, offered comments such as the following: “Not that I’m aware of. There may have been some. I don’t recall. . . . Generally speaking, I think they stayed.” “No, I don’t think so. . . . As far as I know, they all finished.” “I honestly can’t remember any. I think there may have been a couple of female students who—but I really don’t remember clearly whether they finished or not.” “None of the ones I knew. I can’t think of any. I think we all graduated.”

Male interviewees seemed somewhat less aware of the presence of other black students. “I don’t remember any. . . . My circle was pretty small, if they were not in athletics. But I don’t remember anyone in athletics, no.” “No, I didn’t know of any who didn’t [graduate]. As a matter of fact, I didn’t even know if some *did*.”

Outcome

Participants were asked for factual information about themselves and their careers. These included their full name, what years they were at Montclair State, what degree they earned, what were their major and minor, and their first teaching position—how soon after graduation they began, where it was, and the racial composition of the class or school. The final questions in this section addressed their subsequent career path and education. Tinto used the term “outcome” to mean success in completing college, but given the fact that everyone in this study graduated, it is used here to mean instead the individual’s subsequent success in career and society: What did the student do with his or her degree?

Degree Earned and Years Spent at the College

Twenty-six of the 28 respondents received bachelor's degrees from Montclair State. (Tom is included in this section rather than his wife, Alma, who received a master's degree only.) One of the remaining two received a Montclair State Normal School diploma and the other received a College High School diploma. Of the 26, 16 (62%) experienced the traditional four-year curriculum; one white female was in this group. Four (15%) graduated within five years—one spent an extra year in France as an exchange student; one (a white male) was on military leave for a year; one was on medical leave for a semester; and one was on leave for a semester due to marriage (his choice, not a college requirement).

Of the remaining six respondents, three (including one white male) completed their studies at Montclair in three or three and a half years due to receiving transfer credits from other institutions; three others (including one white female) did so through participation in the accelerated program during World War II. In the latter cases, students were encouraged to take summer courses in order to complete their degrees early through a program instituted by the state Board of Education in 1942. Marie (white), who chose not to accelerate, cited two reasons that the program was established.

One is they wanted to get as many males through before they would be drafted. Number two, there supposedly was a teacher shortage, and they were getting more people out into the classrooms, and that's what they had in mind.

Her classmate Vernell observed:

Four or five days after I entered college, the Germans marched into Poland, which meant we smelled the war coming, and by . . . early 1942, we were in the war. We were accelerated. We had to graduate at least a semester early. We went to summer school, two summer schools.

Audrey (white) recalled that “they needed especially us as math teachers; they needed us. And the fellows were all being taken. . . . It was an option, but many did.” The accelerated program was discontinued with the spring 1948 term (*Annual Report 1949 1*).

Major and Minor

The most popular majors, chosen by 15 respondents (58%), were social studies (8) and English (7). The remaining 11 students (42%) majored in science (3), Latin (2), mathematics (2), Spanish (2), French (1), and speech (1).

Twenty-one respondents (80%) minored in English (8), science (5), geography (4), or social studies (4). Other minors were physical education (3), accounting (2), business education (1), French (1), and Spanish (1). In three cases, students had more than one minor. Several other students considered the courses they took toward certification in elementary education as a second minor, although none of the transcripts indicates this to be the case officially.

When Teaching Began

Leaving out the College High School graduate, there were 27 students who sought teaching positions upon receiving their certification. Of these, 14 (52%) began teaching immediately upon graduation—that is, in the fall following a spring or summer commencement or midway through the academic year following a winter commencement. Six students (22%), including one who graduated in the winter, waited for a full semester or portion thereof before obtaining teaching positions.

Of the remaining seven, two were forced to wait a full year. Two waited until they obtained their master’s degree (a year and a half for one, who enrolled after being unsuccessful in finding a teaching job, and two years for the other, whose plan was to get

the second degree before teaching). One waited three years because she wanted to teach in a particular district that seemed to have a quota system; one chose to wait until her children were older; and one only substituted without ever locating a permanent teaching position.

Five graduates did substitute teaching before acquiring their own full-time positions. Two began their teaching careers on the college level (one at Spelman, the semester following college graduation, and the other at Howard after earning her master's degree).

Examining by race the data on students who started teaching immediately, three of the four white students (75%) did so whereas only 11 of the 23 black students (48%) received and accepted an offer to begin the semester after graduation. The one white student who had to wait before obtaining a teaching position then left the profession within a few months and instead pursued educational administration on the college level. However, all of the black students who had to wait but ultimately did begin teaching remained in the field for a substantial period of time.

Marilyn, who only substituted and never became a full-time teacher, went on to serve as a school librarian. In her words, "I ran all around trying to get a job teaching both in New Jersey and in New York . . . [but] nothing was open at that time [1946]. Jobs were very tight." However, it may be recalled that her intention from the start was not to teach and her practice teaching was not a good experience. It is possible that she approached the job search halfheartedly.

When George was questioned about why he had to substitute in 1949, he paused a moment and then declared: "No one was hiring black people as teachers! They just weren't. . . . And to teach Latin? Forget it! I think people thought, 'He couldn't possibly be able to teach Latin.' . . . I really do, because I went for a couple of jobs." As noted

earlier, he eventually obtained a position through assistance from a college faculty member.

Juanita, whose hometown was Atlantic City, desired to remain in north Jersey. She reluctantly took a job in a day care center in Orange when she could not obtain a teaching position after graduation in 1951, and the following year returned home to teach in Atlantic City. “I knew that I could get hired in Atlantic City.”

Several students, both black and white, received job offers before they graduated. Some of them became employed at the schools where they had practice taught and others were in high demand because of the war shortage that resulted from male teachers being drafted. During the Depression, of course, the situation had been reversed as people of all races encountered difficulty in finding jobs. This point was mentioned by participants in the study as well as by other white graduates.

The daughters of two deceased African American students stated in informal interviews that one, who graduated in 1919, found a teaching position in her own former elementary school in Elizabeth and the other, a 1936 alumna, never taught. Four white alumnae of the normal school who were not participants in the study (1916, 1920, 1922, and 1927) all said that they had found positions in north Jersey.

First Teaching Position

It was expected that most black graduates would be clustered in certain school districts with primarily black teacher and/or student populations. But that was not the case; the situation had changed favorably over the three decades under study and most subjects of this study graduated in the later years.

Of the 22 black teachers, four (18%) began teaching in Newark—two in primarily black schools and two in primarily white schools. Two (9%) started in

Elizabeth in racially mixed schools and two (9%) began in Boonton in all-white schools.

The remaining 14 joined the faculties at 14 different locations, of which the following are within the state of New Jersey—seven in the northern part of the state and only two in the southern part: Atlantic City (mixed), East Orange (mixed), Englewood (primarily black), Hackettstown (primarily white), Jersey City (mixed), Lawnside (primarily black), Orange (primarily white), Rahway (mixed), West Paterson (white). The remaining five went out of state as follows: Atlanta, Georgia (primarily black), Calvert County, Maryland (black), Cleveland, Ohio (white), Selma, Alabama (black), and Washington, DC (primarily black).

The four white teachers all began their careers in northern New Jersey as follows: Millburn (white), Orange (primarily white), Weehawken (white), and West Orange (white).

One of the white students, Marie '43, and several of the African Americans did not get job offers until after the academic year had begun, and when they did begin working it was to fill in for teachers who went on leave. For example, Norma '33 graduated magna cum laude but could not find a position in her preferred location, Jersey City. One and a half years later, she was offered a job at Selma University in Alabama, which actually was a secondary school. "The teacher of English became pregnant and, of course, they didn't allow her to do any teaching after that. . . . That's when I came in, at the mid-term. And then the following year, I spent the whole year." Joyce '56 also filled in for someone who had to leave in November. Thelma A '44 and Jeannette '59 began teaching midyear. All of them had been unsuccessful in finding positions at the start of the year.

Reuben '59 and Roberta '57 began teaching midyear, but because they also had graduated midyear, their situations were different from those who had to wait for a

position. Reuben was offered a job teaching science in a department in which all of the other five teachers were also Montclair graduates. In fact, the department chair was Tom '40. Roberta took over for a teacher who was forced by law to retire in the middle of the year due to her age. All of these teachers continued in the districts where they were hired initially to replace someone leaving during the academic year except Marie (white), who left the profession entirely at the end of the first year.

Florence '28 graduated midyear after practice teaching in the town of Montclair. "But when I applied for a job . . . Montclair said you really must have experience before we can ever hire you." Interestingly, the Interracial Committee of the New Jersey Conference of Social Work used similar words in a 1932 report: "Many principals prefer hiring teachers of experience from other sections of the country" (38) to hiring newly graduated black New Jersey teachers. One of the Interracial Committee's conclusions was that black teachers should be employed in the integrated public schools "wherever practical and feasible" (70), leaving open the question of what was either practical or feasible.

Florence worked in her brother's business following her midyear graduation and, at the beginning of the next academic year, took a position in Lawnside (a black borough near Camden in south Jersey). She eventually married and they returned to Montclair to raise their children. After substitute teaching in Montclair for awhile, she was "hired for the entire year because the regular teacher had to go upstate New York to take care of her sick mother and they knew she was not going to come back that year." The next year, a teacher decided she was going to retire, "so they called on me rather than go through the trouble of hiring another teacher." By that time, the town of Montclair had begun only recently to hire permanent African American teachers, thanks to the efforts of alumna

Octavia Warren Catlett '22 and the local NAACP. The first such appointment (of Mabel Frazier Hudson, who was not a Montclair graduate) was in 1946.

Vernell '43 graduated midyear and found “there was no willingness to accept a high school black teacher” in her hometown of Elizabeth. She instead enrolled at Howard University and began teaching there immediately upon earning her master’s degree. Six years later, George '49 graduated and found no job opportunities in his hometown. After a year’s delay, he was able to obtain a position in Vernell’s hometown of Elizabeth with the assistance of a college faculty member. The reasons for the success of one versus the failure of the other in the same town are unclear. Perhaps the intervening years had softened the prejudice of hiring officials, or the subject matter made a difference (social studies versus Latin), or there were more applicants in one year than the other, or male teachers were in demand. George had his own suspicions:

I realized a couple of years after I was there that one of the reasons I was hired was . . . [the] greater number of black students going there. And their theory was that those students could be better controlled if they had black teachers. . . . But [black] students didn’t react any different to me than they did to anybody else, except that they had not learned to have respect for black people who were in positions of authority. I had no problem with my white students.

Four subjects found their first positions in Newark—more than in any other location, but still a small number. Some of them felt both lucky and angry. Teaching in Newark required passing a written as well as an oral examination. In the words of Alma '43 (MA), whose hometown it was: “At that time, of course, Newark had a very good reputation.”¹⁶⁰ Alma could not get an elementary position in the city upon graduating

¹⁶⁰ Newark’s schools were nationally recognized in the early twentieth century “for their innovative attempts to serve an urban clientele.” The reputation may have remained good to outsiders, but “a 1940 assessment of the district schools noted that low achievement and dilapidated schools were common, and that measures to meet the needs of the city’s poor (most of whom in 1940 were still white working-class ethnics) must be taken” (Anyon 70).

from Newark State Teachers College in 1940; the exams were not being given due to the scarcity of jobs during the Depression. When the tests were offered again in 1943, she obtained a position. Katherine '34 also was hired in 1943 to teach high school at her alma mater in Newark. By that time she had a master's degree and eight years of college teaching experience, and could easily pass for white; any of these factors may have given her an edge over other black applicants.

Gerry '53 was able to obtain a position teaching mathematics in a Newark junior high school immediately upon graduation. But Howard '56 asserted that Newark "had tests that were geared to manipulate the process. . . . You had to be politically connected to get in" and he did not. Ethel B '57 found:

In 1957 it was very, very difficult *for blacks* to get jobs in practically any city in New Jersey and especially in Newark. . . . This oral [examination], it's very subjective, and if for any reason that they did not wish to hire you, you were not hired. . . . I had graduated from one of the best colleges in the nation, received a fairly good grade average and passed the written exam [for the city of Newark] with one of the highest scores.

An article in the college newspaper two decades earlier confirmed that the Newark examination was based on subject matter knowledge, pedagogy, *and personality* (*Pelican* 4/6/33), which seems to provide an "out" for rejecting a candidate. The white oral examiner did reject Ethel B two years in a row for a position in the elementary schools, and she believed the decision was racially motivated. "It was an unspoken law . . . that at a certain point they'd cut off having blacks."

Ethel B could have accepted a position in another city, but "I was just determined that I would get a job in Newark. . . . This is a big city; there were a lot of people there. I knew I could be of service and of value." By 1959, "strangely enough, there was no more like cutting it off at six or seven blacks in the system." And this time the oral examiner was African American—none other than Tom '40, the husband of Alma who

was unable to obtain a position in Newark two decades earlier. Ethel B was hired. “The majority of us went to [one of two schools] which had a lot of black teachers.”

Reuben ’59, who had done his practice teaching in Newark, said: “I found a teaching job in Newark because of my training at Montclair. You know, you had to take a National Teachers Examination to get a job in Newark at that time. I took it and passed it.” He became a junior high science teacher in the city immediately upon leaving Montclair midyear. Jeannette ’59 graduated a semester later and applied for a high school position in Newark after turning down offers in her hometown, Jersey City. (“It was just my own personal policy that I didn’t want to teach in the district or even the city where I lived. I felt you lost a lot of privacy.”) She found that in Newark, “you couldn’t teach high school unless you had taught junior high. . . . That was a policy of the Newark school system, so it was necessary for me to start in junior high.” Even for that, she had to take a course with the words “junior high” in the title in order to be considered. “They wouldn’t accept adolescent psychology, for example, or how to teach adolescents, let’s say, English or whatever. It had to be ‘junior high.’” She complied, was hired midyear to teach in a junior high school, and promptly requested and received a transfer to a high school for the next year. She recalled that she and another Montclair graduate, Frederic Martin ’57, were the only two African American teachers in the school.

When Alma began teaching in Newark in 1943, she was one of only 10 black teachers in the entire district.

They were of various ages, scattered over appointment periods of . . . 20 years or more before 1943. . . . For a considerable time after my entry into the system, I was aware whenever another black came in. Of course, the pace accelerated and the numbers became greater.

Newark was a desirable teaching location in the view of these black graduates, but many others were happy to find positions elsewhere. Florence ’28, as noted above,

was very pleased to be hired in the black community of Lawnside in south Jersey, “because many of the young women coming out of normal schools had to go out in the rural areas.” Lawnside “was a special place. The main population was black. The mayor, all the town officials, everybody . . . was black who had positions,” said Florence. It was one of a number of all-black enclaves established by ex-slaves in south Jersey (W. Gordon 4, quoting Wright). However, 26 white families in one section of the borough had started a private school in their church. State officials insisted that the children attend the existing school, “which they did, and the children didn’t have any problems—none of them. Young children always get along anyhow. It’s the older people who start problems.”¹⁶¹

Most of the black subjects in this study who graduated in later years, after the normal school had become a college, did not find it necessary to teach in rural areas. In fact, many were drawn to larger municipalities where the student population was generally mixed. One exception was Tom ’40, whose first job was in the fairly populous city of Englewood. The junior high school had just been built onto an existing elementary school, and the students were virtually all black.

Of those who did *not* go to the bigger cities, Ethel M ’48 taught in West Paterson, where the only black children in the school were her own. Matthew ’54 went to Hackettstown, where he was raised and where the pupils were all white with a few exceptions. He said:

Well, you have to understand that if you could breathe and could stand on one leg, you could teach in those days because there was such a shortage of teachers. And in this area we were getting a lot of our teachers from Pennsylvania. The coal mines were closing down and they were closing schools in Pennsylvania,

¹⁶¹ A white student in the 1930s recalled writing a paper for a Montclair sociology class that focused on the theme: “Children are not prejudiced.”

and so we were getting a lot of teachers from Pennsylvania. But a person who had the kind of certification I had was in full demand.

Gwen '53 and Patricia '56 stayed in their bucolic hometown of Boonton, which had racial demographics similar to those of Hackettstown. Patricia observed that “everybody knew what they were and we respected each other, but . . . [later] there was a period where the real animosity began to evolve . . . anything based on color.”

The remainder went out of state. As noted earlier, Vernell '43 began her teaching at Howard University and Norma '33 started at Selma University. While George '49 and several others received assistance from college faculty members, Bernice '53 was advised by her practice teaching supervisor to look for work in the big cities herself because “I can’t find anything for you.”

Bernice selected the city while attending a sorority conference that happened to be held in Cleveland, Ohio during her senior year. Hearing that jobs were plentiful due to an influx of European immigrants joining family there after the war, she filled out an application. A Montclair faculty member loaned her the money to return for an interview with district personnel. She was hired and assigned, sight unseen, to a principal who assumed from her last name, Mallory, that she was “a good Irish girl.” The principal later admitted she would not have accepted her otherwise. “And she says, ‘And oh what a gem I got!’ It was really a riot!” Bernice chose to laugh rather than to become angry.

Alma found nothing in New Jersey after graduating from Newark State Teachers College in 1940. She wondered if she should give up her teaching dream, and had no one with whom to discuss her dilemma—she did not know any other college graduates in her neighborhood. “In fact, I think a great number of my contemporaries didn’t finish high school. And, of course, most people that finished high school did not go to college.”

While barely supporting herself with “little” jobs through the National Youth Administration,

I discovered that most black people had to go South somewhere to teach. . . . And I think sometimes even in the colleges it would be said to them, “Of course, you’re going South to help your people!” And I think they always said “yes” because they wanted to get their hands on the degree, of course, first of all. Then they would see.

Alma then applied “someplace in Maryland because I had known girls who went to Maryland. In fact, I think I had heard of more young women who went to Maryland for their initial teaching experience.” She also decided to apply for a position in Washington, DC “because that was a set procedure that I could understand.” She passed the written, physical, and oral examinations with the highest score and began teaching elementary school in DC in 1941.

Coincidentally—and they were unknown to each other—Norma ’33 also obtained a job in DC in 1941 after having taught in Selma, Alabama, temporarily replacing a high school teacher on sabbatical. She subsequently took the same DC exams and found herself number two on the list. She was forced to wait until the top scorer was placed before being hired permanently, then continued teaching in the district for a total of 35 years.¹⁶²

Alma, however, married Tom ’40 and returned to New Jersey after teaching in DC for two years. She said that the Newark examinations were finally given after a lapse of approximately seven years during which no jobs had been available in the city due to the Depression. She was hired in Newark as one of “only 10 black teachers in the system

¹⁶² Between the temporary and permanent teaching positions, Norma worked at the Bureau of Engraving from 1942 to 1944. Another coincidence is that Beatrice Harvey, a 1942 master’s graduate of MSTC, also worked in the Bureau of Engraving during those years. Each apparently did not realize the other was there, although they had met years before when Norma dated Bea’s friend from Upsala, where she did her undergraduate work. Bea also knew Norma’s second husband decades before they married.

and they were of various ages, scattered over appointment periods . . . 20 years or more before 1943.” As indicated earlier, her husband Tom later became instrumental in changing the racial profile of Newark’s teaching staff during the 1950s. Alma herself became a highly respected educational administrator, and in 1964 was named the city’s first black female principal—exactly 100 years after the first black male principal took charge of the Newark “colored school.”¹⁶³ Later, a Newark elementary school was named in her honor.

Thelma A ’44 was unsuccessful in finding a position within the state, but was hired in Maryland to teach high school, corroborating statements by Alma and others that many newly graduated black teacher aspirants could find work in that state. Upon returning to New Jersey, she still was unable to obtain a high school position, for which she had been trained, and took courses for certification on the elementary level. Then she found employment.

As described earlier, Katherine ’34 became a “problem” for the placement bureau due to her racial identity. The college department head came to her rescue with a teaching position. “She contacted the General Education Board, the Rockefeller Foundation, and they were able to send me to Spelman College in Atlanta, Georgia.”

Tom ’40, who later facilitated a change in Newark’s hiring practices, had difficulty finding a position himself. He had begun his master’s work in science upon completion of the baccalaureate and attempted to secure a job—any job—before graduation in 1942. A classmate referred him to a company in need of a scientist for war-related work. Alma said, “But when they saw his face, that was the end of it. Even with

¹⁶³ James A. Baxter served as Newark’s first black principal from 1864 until his death in 1909 (*Star-Ledger*, 1/26/99).

wartime being on and all of that, the chemical industry didn't have any place for him."

She continued: "He was disappointed, of course. But, you know, it's something that you meet so often when discrimination runs rampant. . . . It's not a total surprise, but sometimes you think maybe things will be different." He finally was hired to teach beginning that fall.

Roberta '57 was asked if, when she was about to graduate midyear, she had any sense that she would not have been able to teach in a particular school. She replied with an emphatic "no" and said she had never thought that way. "I always thought whatever was out there, was possible." She was recruited to her first position without seeking it and, in fact, before the time she had wanted to begin working. Roberta, Patricia '56, Gwen '53, and Matthew '54 all reported that they had never applied for a position; authorities had sought them out for each job they had held. However, the expectations and experiences of many of their classmates were decidedly different, as shown above.

Two white graduates who were not formally interviewed offered the following comments. Evelyn Johnson '36 wrote:

Back in the '30s, we were concerned with preparing ourselves to become the best possible teachers of whatever mix of students who would become our responsibility. Had I been Afro American at that time, I think I may have been very concerned that no matter how well prepared I might be, I would probably have had difficulty being considered as a future employee of many school boards.

Goldie Megill Fincke '28 said: "My teaching career was in an integrated school and every class that I taught had two or more African American students whom I dearly loved."

Career Path

See the section above on “Interviewees” for a listing of degrees and career paths for each respondent. Montclair State’s mission was to train secondary school teachers. As shown in the previous section, most graduates did enter the profession, but not always in the junior and senior high schools in which they had intended to teach upon entering the college. In fact, 12 of the respondents are known to have received certification in elementary education along with secondary education and 10 of them taught at the primary level at some point during their career or for its entirety. Others who did not graduate with dual certification obtained it later and taught in the elementary schools. According to Joyce ’56, “nobody was hiring English teachers and social studies teachers in those days, so they encouraged us to get a second area for that reason, and mine was elementary education, which is where I started teaching.”¹⁶⁴ Gwen ’53 recalled that “because there was such a shortage of elementary teachers in New Jersey at that time, the rest of us were forced to take electives in elementary ed. . . . We were all certified with a double minor . . . our regular minor and the elementary ed.” She also indicated that there were only two or three high school openings to teach Spanish, her major, when she graduated. Thus elementary teaching was attractive, although she subsequently had the opportunity to teach a Spanish mini-course as well.

Howard ’56 did not think the elementary courses were required, but said he was trying “to prepare myself to get a job, so if I did both things, it would broaden the possibilities.” Bernice ’53 remembered it this way: “They put in the elementary because there was a need at that time. . . . The number of courses that we took made it almost like

¹⁶⁴ Joyce subsequently entered the difficult work of special education and eventually became troubled by the number of her pupils who died. “I don’t think I could have faced another death and I have known about 50 kids who have died over the years.”

a double minor.” In the words of Juanita ’51, because “there was a shortage of elementary school teachers . . . they required all of us to take elementary education courses.” Thelma C ’53 said it was “sort of a requirement” to take courses for elementary certification, “but I think you have to include economics. All the jobs were in elementary.” Roberta ’57 stated that “in those years, as the baby boomers were continuing to hit the elementary schools, they were in dire need of elementary teachers and we were required—we felt forced—to take elementary education as a second minor.” Matthew ’54 said: “At Montclair at that time all students, as far as I know, took their major in secondary and their minor in secondary and a second minor in elementary.” Finally, Patricia ’56 recalled that “they had an emergency situation in the schools and they gave me emergency certification for elementary.”

The preceding quotes demonstrate how people may remember a situation in slightly or significantly different ways. Nevertheless, although the factors recalled as precipitating their preparation in elementary education differ and their views on whether or not it was a second minor differ, all subjects accurately asserted the fact of having received such certification. They remembered the circumstances in the context of their own feelings at the time—two people feeling “forced” and others feeling almost grateful for additional career opportunities. The courses *were* required, according to President Sprague’s annual report for 1948-49:

The teacher shortage in the field of elementary education during the year 1948-49 and particularly as a prospect for the five succeeding years led to the organization of a dual program . . . [providing] that free electives in the various curricula be used for the single purpose of offering and requiring basic courses in the theory and practice of teaching in the elementary schools. (4)

A few respondents started working in careers other than teaching when they were unable to locate positions, although all but one eventually did teach and that one became a public school librarian. Many female subjects took time out from teaching to raise

children and three male subjects responded to the call for military service at some point after graduation.

Five people left elementary and/or secondary teaching to pursue counseling. Some branched into specialized teaching such as language skills for court reporters (1), special education (2), reading specialist (4), and New Jersey “alternate route” teacher trainer (1). Ten taught college either full time or part time. Others went into K-12, college, regional, or federal educational administration. One became a teachers’ union president and another became a private consultant in education, social research, and training. One authored a textbook, another wrote a novel, and a third published a book of poetry. One became a chaplain at Montclair. Two ultimately fulfilled lifelong dreams to become lawyers.

Some subjects were pioneers. Howard ’56, for example,

was the first black male teacher in Orange. I was the first black assistant principal in Montclair. I was the first black high school principal in the state of Washington. I was the youngest assistant superintendent in the Baltimore public school system.

Two subjects reported with delight on opportunities they created to teach subjects outside the expected curriculum. Roberta ’57 had majored in Spanish, but found herself in the elementary classroom instead. One year when the music program was eliminated because no teacher was available, she and another classroom teacher who had majored in music decided to teach their combined classes two periods of Spanish and music respectively, “and it was delightful.” Bernice ’53, an elementary, reading, and social studies teacher who loved music, added music to her teaching repertoire for two years. “I’m sure that if they knew it downtown they would have died because you’re supposed to have a certification! But that’s another one of those things in my life.”

All four white subjects and four of the black subjects returned to Montclair State in faculty and/or administrative positions later in their careers. All of the white subjects became faculty members. In addition, Audrey '43 served as campus chaplain, Marie '43 as secretary and counselor,¹⁶⁵ Irv '49 as department chair, dean, and vice president, and Moe '49 as fundraiser. Marie worked for some years with E. DeAlton Partridge when he was dean of instruction. He praised her efficiency and was grateful that she “knew of the foibles and idiosyncrasies of faculty and staff . . . [and] used to say that they are like children and need to be led by the hand. This was probably an exaggeration, but there were occasions when it seemed to be true” (Partridge 1983 46). The four white respondents all expressed their deep fondness for the college and enjoyed long service as employees culminating in retirement.

Of the four black subjects who returned to Montclair, only Tom '40 became a faculty member and remained at the college until retirement. He also judged track meets and provided running shoes and scholarships for needy students. Reuben '59 worked with the Urban Institute and directed the Educational Opportunity Fund program and Jeannette '59 was assistant director of the Upward Bound summer program, but both went on to careers elsewhere. At the time of our interview, Roberta '57 was still teaching in a public school while serving concurrently as an “alternate route” teacher trainer and an adjunct professor in a Montclair State educational renewal project.

Like the white subjects, Roberta expressed great pleasure in learning and working at Montclair. Tom also enjoyed his work on campus. But Reuben said:

¹⁶⁵ Following retirement, Marie's husband became seriously ill and she found herself in the positions of “a practical nurse and a housekeeper, two jobs that I'm not very good at, because I did much better in my work career than I do . . . in traditional roles for women.”

I would say that [racism] probably wasn't as overt and I wasn't as perceptive. . . . I'm not calling it "racist." But I'm saying that . . . there was an aspect of what I felt was racism at Montclair during my tenure as an administrator there.

Nevertheless, he praised the college's affirmative action outreach in recruiting him to work on campus before he even knew a job opening existed.

Jeannette '59 had just retired at the time of our interview and was still in a transition from educator to retiree. She related a story about the difficulties of giving up such a long-standing role.

And it was funny, the other morning I went to the store to buy the newspapers and these girls, dressed for school—very nicely dressed for school, bookbags and all—walked into the stationery store just to get some pencils or whatever. One of them said to the other one, "I didn't do my language arts homework last night." I chirped up over here, "You didn't do your homework? You didn't do your language arts report?" She looked at me and said, "No." So I said, "Why?" She just didn't get around to it. I said, "What grade are you?" She said, "Eighth." I said, "So, that means you're going to get double homework tonight." "No, no." I said, "Really? You should have had me as your English teacher!"

We both laughed, and she continued:

And then I smiled because I remembered, "Jeannette, you're not in school." But the student was very nice. She didn't say anything to me . . . but she could have told me to mind my own business.

Other Education

See the information above in the list of interviewees for specific degrees earned subsequently by each one. In the summary below, the College High School graduate is not included (although she later received both a BS and an MBA from Montclair State). Of the 27 remaining respondents, 24 (89%) went on to earn master's degrees and 10 (37%) earned doctoral degrees. Among these are one PhD, two JD (both of which were acquired after the master's), and seven EdD (including all four white subjects). Four other interviewees (15%) completed work toward a doctorate without actually receiving it, and one did some work toward a master's degree.

Vernell was writing her dissertation when her professor died, and she never finished it. Katherine was doing language study and, at the critical moment, could not travel to France to carry out the required research because of World War II. Instead, she took summer courses in Canada and Mexico and “had so many credits beyond my master’s that I received [salary] credit for having a doctorate!” Thus, the incentive for pursuing the terminal degree was lost, and she later regretted her decision to stop.

Thelma A was raising children while working on her doctorate and pondered, “Do I want to be Dr. Courtney or do I want to be Mother Courtney? And my decision was, I’ll be a mother. I can’t do both.” Gwen finished most of her course work, but after two deadline extensions was unable to complete the degree due to other demands on her time. Ethel B worked toward a master’s degree without completing it. Reuben flew to Kenya to enroll in a doctoral program and found his plans thwarted before he could even begin when the University of Nairobi was closed down by riots.

Audrey (white) earned an MDiv after receiving her doctorate. Many other respondents received nondegree certifications of various types or took courses for particular reasons. For example, Florence learned Spanish because she worked in a district with many students who spoke that language. Only Ethel M and Lillian did not seek additional formal education, but they had full and interesting careers.

Vernell compared Montclair with her master’s institution, Howard University, where she “was not very happy.” She explained: “The first semester I had three of the worst teachers in my life.” She told the department head, “I had a better undergraduate education!”¹⁶⁶ Vernell decided to stay at Howard, “but it was the academic life then that

¹⁶⁶ Dorothy Mamlet Strohl ’43, a white classmate of Vernell who was not a participant in the study, confirmed her view of the quality of the faculty: “The professors were wonderful—better than those at Columbia!”

was good. The social life was not. The men were away [at war and] the women were petty bourgeois; came from families with a little more money than mine had, and very, very different.”

Gerry’s experience at her master’s institution was just the opposite of Vernell’s. Following an unhappy four years at Montclair, she attended Teachers College at Columbia along with three African American teacher colleagues. There she had a good social experience without the isolation she felt during her undergraduate years.

Joyce also enrolled at Teachers College for her master’s degree and, “having been in Montclair, which was so small, . . . felt like a fish out of water.” She did not feel the sense of community in giant Columbia that she had loved at Montclair and transferred to a smaller program elsewhere. Obviously, individual experiences and personalities affect one’s perceptions.

Each of the 20 black respondents who earned at least one advanced degree used it in educational work. Although subjects were not asked specifically the discipline in which a higher degree was earned, many of them mentioned the area. For those who did not, it can be inferred from the career path. It appears that only three of the 20 African American subjects received noneducation advanced degrees (two in their academic discipline and one in library science), and all three remained in education careers. Even the two who earned JDs later in life had already obtained master’s degrees in education.

Salary

Salary information was not requested specifically, but the following bits of anecdotal evidence came to light. Florence earned \$1,100 at her first elementary teaching job at Lawnside in 1928. “It was not as much as [the town of] Montclair by a long shot, but when you talk about other areas in the south Jersey area, I did very well.” Moe

(white) graduated in 1949 and “waited all summer because I didn’t like the pay they were offering down at the Jersey shore. \$3,200 a year!” While he acknowledged that average salaries were sometimes even less in parts of south Jersey, he held out for a high school position in the northern town of West Orange at \$5,200 a year, “which was slightly better. It was beer money!” Joyce, on the other hand, began her first teaching job in 1956 in a Jersey City junior high school at only \$3,000—less than the salary Moe had rejected seven years earlier.

It is tempting to speculate that whites were paid more than blacks. However, in 1932 the Interracial Committee of the New Jersey Conference of Social Work reported that average annual salaries were relatively the same for black and white teachers (38). “Relative” is evident in that northern districts generally paid more than those in the southern part of the state, better pay was given for the higher school grades, and wealthier districts like West Orange probably had more resources than places like Jersey City. In comparison, a graduate of the Trenton State Normal School who took a position in Virginia (some time prior to 1930) earned \$90 a month when her colleagues with southern educations received only \$50. “A New Jersey degree was more valuable in the South” (Devore 231).

Summary

Although most of the questions posed to interviewees were based on the six categories in Tinto’s model of student departure/retention, several other themes were relevant to the population under study and were included in a final set of questions.

These issues pertained to the subject’s sense of how much other African American students would have shared their perceptions of campus life; the high and low points of each person’s college experience; important changes that occurred during the

time spent at Montclair; contact with classmates and the college itself subsequent to graduation; “grades” assigned to the individual’s education and nonacademic experiences; whether the subject would choose teaching again if the decision could be made anew; and any other observations the person wished to make.

Perceptions Shared by Other Black Students?

About half of the interviewees, including three of the four whites, thought that (other) black students would have shared their perceptions of campus life at Montclair State Teachers College. But about half of that subgroup went on to qualify their responses.

The black participants who gave essentially positive answers made comments such as the following. “I thought their experiences were the same as mine” (Lillian). “I got that impression. . . . Even though we were not having a lot of contact, I could see what they were into. . . . I can remember their demeanor. It was comfortable and they were happy. They enjoyed what they were doing” (Roberta). “I’d say in general those of us who were friends among ourselves probably feel about the same way. I think so” (Jeannette). “Basically. More or less, we understood that because some people weren’t nice to you didn’t mean you had to be put down by them. You just go on your way” (Florence).

Three white participants responded positively as well. Irv thought perceptions would have been “much the same for the few [black] students I knew.” Audrey said, “I honestly think they would have had the same feelings. I really do feel that.” Moe replied: “I find that hard to answer because I wasn’t in their shoes or in their skin. But

the ones I knew intimately were very happy here. And George Harriston, I know, loved it here.”¹⁶⁷

Several African American subjects gave “yes, but” answers. For example, Marilyn initially said that her black classmates felt the way she did. “I rather think so. . . . My impression now is that we all thought the idea was to get through as fast as possible and get a job.” But then she considered that the experience of her classmate Theresa David

was a little different because of this modern language or foreign language thing. She may have had more contact with people there, extracurricular and otherwise, and had a different aspect about her—a different feeling about her being a student there and interacting with others. But I don’t recall that my group, so to speak, had anything—was any different than what my experience was there.

Norma also began by saying, “I imagine it would be the same.” Then she quickly added, “I don’t know.” Patricia answered similarly: “I think they shared basically the same feelings. I don’t know, maybe they didn’t.”

Others were puzzled as well. Matthew said, “I don’t really know. I didn’t see any overt discrimination while I was there. None at all. . . . I can’t really answer that question.” Thelma A thought her situation was different because she was not a native New Jerseyan, having migrated with her family from Virginia.

I don’t know because I have always felt that part of my limitation was because of me. It wasn’t always because of them. By taking me from where I was and putting me into a new environment, it made a lot of difference. I was shy-like, so to speak. I wasn’t at home, and I didn’t fit in. It wasn’t that I didn’t fit in, but I didn’t *let* myself fit in—maybe that was it. . . . Others may have fit in better because they were accustomed to being here all the time. They were born here in New Jersey, so they fit in.

Howard believed that two of his black male classmates “saw things very much as I did.” However, he added, “I really don’t remember having that type of conversation

¹⁶⁷ Moe was correct. Regarding the whole of his Montclair experience, George said: “I loved it.”

about it. . . . They'd talk about a faculty member or something like that . . . but I don't remember getting into any kind of discussion or interaction with them at that level."

Gwen at first said the perceptions of others were probably the same. "Most of us that I know and that were close were really Oreo cookies. . . . Most of us were brought up in areas where the thinking was white, because there weren't that many black people." But she went on to reflect:

I don't know what their perspectives were, but as they talked I didn't sense racism on their part; I didn't sense people were giving them a hard time. It might be a topic for us to talk about when we meet once a year again! I don't know. I can't tell what their perceptions were or are, really.

She concluded that it was not a topic of discussion among black students during her years on campus: "It wasn't. We were too busy looking at the guys and getting our work done."

Like Howard and Gwen, Joyce did not recall talking with other students about their perceptions of campus life and was not sure if they shared her feelings. "I don't know. Possibly not. I have no idea. Isn't that strange? I never remember having conversations about it with other people, other black students—not at all." Marie (white) agreed: "The whole concern about racial relations and all that is a product of the 1960s onwards, and in my day, it wasn't one of the things that people talked about." Juanita concurred: "We didn't talk about it. . . . We didn't have anything to talk about!" She explained:

My first two years, there were no other black students to share the perception of campus life there! And later on, I don't know. Bernice was probably more critical of campus life than I was—Bernice and Connie. . . . I think they enjoyed it, too. . . . It was different because they at least had somebody who had been there and could serve somewhat as a mentor for them.

Juanita added that the lives of black men were probably unlike hers. "From what I understand, the guys had a much different experience. Their experience was not as

pleasant as ours was. . . . I don't know what it was. . . . Most of the black males I knew were commuters."

Juanita believed Bernice and Connie enjoyed being at Montclair. Bernice herself said:

I can really only speak about Connie and somewhat Thelma. Connie loved it here and— Okay, it's interesting now that I'm thinking about it. Connie was more social than I. . . . I don't think there was anything that went on that Connie didn't take part in, that she missed. I missed a number of things, by choice. . . . She was a class officer. . . . I was much more introspective than Connie, so there were a lot of things that I didn't take part in. . . . Thelma, on the other hand— . . . when she came, she slept. Thelma used to sleep all the time.¹⁶⁸

Bernice did cite one specific area of shared perception among the black women who were residential students—that white women should not be aware of their hair care techniques. "We didn't want the white girls to know we pressed our hair, so we had to wait until they went. And then we would press our hair and fan the stuff out the window!" She laughed and added, "Is that a riot?" She realized later that "it didn't have to be hidden. . . . But that's the way we came up, and particularly in a household like mine with my mother. 'Oh, Bernice, *white* ladies!'"

With respect to other shared perceptions, Bernice concluded, "I don't think any of us felt that we *couldn't* [participate in anything on campus]. As I said, things were, as I remember, were almost by choice. And Connie's choice was not to let anything go by." In other words, their perceptions may have differed from hers due to specific choices they made about involvement in campus life. Reuben made a similar observation in saying, "I would think that those students at that time would have felt that they were included if they wanted to be."

¹⁶⁸ Thelma C said: "They teased me because they said I spent my day sleeping! . . . That's not possible and still graduate!"

Juanita and other respondents mentioned that commuters and residents would have had different experiences and, thus, perceptions. Ethel B said:

I really don't think much of it would have been shared . . . unless you really lived on campus. . . . I think generally [commuters] would have felt that if we lived on campus, we would have been more into the social life. . . . The only people, as I said, that I really interacted with were people who lived in Newark.

Gerry also attributed her difference in perception to being a commuter. "I think my experiences were different because I spent so much time on the bus." Although many other African American students had commuted throughout the years under study, it so happened that all four of the other black women in her class of 1953 lived in the residence halls for all or part of their college life. She also pointed out, "There weren't that many black students there" in order to have a good sampling of perceptions.

Thelma C had a pleasant experience at Montclair and, if she had been questioned during her student years, would have said her black classmates felt the way she did. But shortly before our interview, she had a surprising revelation.

When I began to hear about your interviews, . . . [someone] said something to me that was negative, and I was surprised, but I respected it. But then I said to someone else, . . . "You know, I've been thinking about this and I'm not coming up with— . . . I don't have any negatives here. What's wrong?"

She laughed and continued:

Another person said, "Well, I don't have any negatives either." And I immediately felt better—that this person was very positive. And I realized that the person who was very positive was a person who had similar experiences before they came to Montclair—that they had lived in an integrated situation, that they had been afforded certain leadership roles, and that perhaps that it was what we brought to it was such a positive thing that if there were negatives, we didn't know they were there.

Thelma C concluded:

Many times if you decide that you want to accomplish something and you have a goal, you just move toward that goal and when there are obstacles, you overcome or move around. . . . I don't really know how everyone felt, but I know that some of us did have a positive experience here.

Six subjects stated clearly that other black students would *not* have shared their perceptions of campus life. The reason given by Ethel M and Katherine was that they were not visually identifiable as black. Ethel M said:

I think that my experience was a little bit different, simply because I was mistaken at times. . . . So it's a little hard for me to say. I don't recall. I remember chatting with other black students and I don't recall anyone feeling any particular pressure, but maybe I blotted it out.

Katherine said simply, "I imagine their experiences would have been different."

George responded to the question: "That's hard to say." He explained, "None of my fellow black students when I was here were as active as I was. I think that made a difference, you know, in how they might have finally viewed their college experience."

Alma, who was at Newark State for her undergraduate degree, attributed differences in perceptions to differences in socioeconomic status. "Possibly someone from a more advantaged background might have had a little different experience from not being needy and from having had more advantages. . . . Perhaps socially, interpersonally—not academically." Ironically, Vernell made the following comment regarding Alma's husband: "I think Tom probably had a better social life than I did. Everybody loved him. He liked the girls and he had a mobility that I didn't have because he was a male. . . . Tom was lionized here and there and so forth."¹⁶⁹

Vernell was the only African American in her class, but speculated about the possible reasons for diversity in the perceptions of those who were in other classes while she was a student. She thought a black female friend may have had a disadvantage because

her family was primarily Caribbean, and I say disadvantage because blacks and Caribbeans have contentions—you know, the way, let's say, Dominicans and

¹⁶⁹ Alma confirmed this view: "I think he certainly inspired a lot of people. With the pain of losing him, it was wonderful to see how many people loved him so much. That was wonderful to know, really."

Puerto Ricans have. And [she] tended to be a little bit old fashioned . . . very sweet and very nonthreatening, very quiet. So she wasn't really quite able to get into some of the circles.

Vernell then described individual characteristics of the only other two black women on campus during her years at Montclair and concluded that the four of them did “not at all” share the same experiences due to these personal distinctions.

High and Low Points

One subject, Gerry, asserted that there were no high points during her four years at MSTC. Conversely, others mentioned more than one. The high point cited more than any other (by 11 people) was graduation. For Ethel B, “the whole process of graduating,” including the baccalaureate service and related events, was part of the high point. “It just seems that maybe because we were all graduating and we had gone through all of this, everyone seemed to be extra friendly!” Juanita was elated that she had the personal stamina to remain long enough to graduate. Patricia said that hearing the commencement speech given by Dr. Benjamin Mays, then president of historically black Morehouse College, was an additional graduation highlight.

For seven participants, academic achievement stood out as a high point. Vernell cited “the work that I did in economics, because I was so startled that I liked it.” In fact, at a restaurant dinner she “was presented with this lovely little silver pin by Professor Rellahan. . . . It was a piece of jewelry. It wasn't . . . an academic pin. And I was just very pleased, very pleased. I knew I was good in history—but in economics!” Katherine and Gwen talked about their studies abroad in France and Mexico, respectively. Roberta's high point was “when my ear kicked in” in learning Spanish. For Bernice, it was the “field studies course and we went over to New York. . . . I think it was eight trips. It was wonderful. It was like it opened up a whole new world for me.” Jeannette

summed up by saying, “A high point might have been that I felt that I had gotten a really good, purely academic education at Montclair and I really felt prepared.”

Five subjects mentioned campus activities and honors as peak experiences. These included serving as photography editor of the yearbook (Joyce), being inducted into Kappa Delta Pi, a national honorary society for education (Norma), working on the establishment of a campus chapter of the NAACP and meeting personally with the college president in the process (Jeannette), graduating cum laude (Marie – white), and being recognized in Who’s Who (George).

Nine interviewees stated that being at Montclair in general was a high point. Marilyn said, “Being accepted, first of all, because it had the reputation of being *the* teachers college at the time. And if you got into Montclair, I mean, you really knew you were pretty good stuff.” She also referred to the fine relationship with most of her teachers and said, “I felt very comfortable being there at the time.” For Ethel M, it was “developing friendships and enjoying some of the courses tremendously.” Moe (white) declared, “I had a marvelous time because I did everything I wanted to do.” Others, including one of the white subjects, said all points were high. In the words of Lillian, “It was wonderful, everything about it. I don’t remember low times.”

When asked about low points, it was predictable that several people could think of none given their assertion that all points were high. In addition to Lillian, Gwen had no low points and compared college to high school, which was a “wonderful experience” for her. Bernice pondered: “You know, it’s funny, I can’t think of a low point if there was, and I’m sure there must have been some. But I can’t recall anything. If there was, I put it down inside and I can’t put my finger on anybody that I was really angry or upset with.”

Similarly, Marilyn said, “I can’t think of anything right now that really pops out as something unusual or extraordinary. . . . It may be back there in the folds someplace, but I can’t bring it up right now.” Thelma A equivocated a bit in saying, “Nothing low—nothing—couple of little experiences, you know. Something may have happened. It wasn’t even worth thinking about a second time. There were no lows.” And Florence stated her philosophy plainly: “No low points. . . . I try to look . . . for the best in everything, and therefore I find it. But when you look for something that isn’t so good, you’re going to find that too.”

Eight participants described academically-related issues as low points. These included practice teaching, certain courses they found difficult or distasteful, the process of changing the major, and freezing up when asked a question in a favorite class. Three people mentioned social low points such as not dating (Joyce and Patricia) and “the fact that I wasn’t really able to really be friends, you know, 100%” (Frances). She went on to explain, “I know it was a barrier that I created just as well as anybody else. We got along very well because they knew that I was not looking for real deep, lasting friendships. I think that would be a low point.”

Those social low points had racial roots, and race-related issues were brought up by five other subjects as well. For Gerry, the low point was having her campaign posters torn down. Ethel M cited the “mix-up” in her practice teaching assignment in which she was denied access to a school at the last moment when officials learned she was black.¹⁷⁰ Vernell talked about the incident described earlier in which a dark Italian student returned

¹⁷⁰ Nevertheless, she gave the college coordinator the benefit of the doubt. “I remember feeling that he actually thought he was doing the right thing. He felt that he would have been remiss not to have called them and made this declaration. . . . I would have preferred if he had talked to me about it first, you know, or at least have alerted me that he was thinking of doing this and what do you think, which is more how it would be handled today.”

from a semester abroad and, in Vernell's presence, was kidded about looking "just like a n—." Jeannette mentioned the negative vote on chartering a student NAACP chapter. And for Juanita, it was the culture shock "when I went to Montclair and realized that there would be so few people of my race at the place. . . . You get there and your parents leave and you look around, and you're it!"

Five interviewees noted personal or miscellaneous types of low points such as illness and the resulting loss of a scholarship, general lack of funds, death of a relative, spending nearly five hours to reach the campus by bus in a snowstorm and finding oneself the only student there, the process of transferring in from another college, and the tragedies associated with World War II.

Both the high and low feelings about Montclair were wrapped up for George in the experience of graduation. "The day I graduated, I was so happy. I got home and I sat down, and I felt like I was going to cry because I was saying, 'It's all over.' . . . You felt as if you had been dropped off something and here you were. What do I do now?"

Important Changes

The most frequently occurring response (10) to the question of changes during the interviewee's years on campus was some variant of "none." They gave answers such as "I can't remember any," "very staid," and "pretty much stayed the same." Those who did notice differences cited facilities, war effects, curriculum, enrollment, and personal changes.

The most commonly noted change (8) related to facilities. Florence '28 remembered that a tennis court and a residence hall—Chapin Hall, the third campus structure—were built during her normal school tenure. Moe '49 (white) and Thelma C '53 recalled the temporary buildings that arose like mushrooms in the night to

accommodate the influx of veterans following World War II. Five other subjects referred to the massive construction program initiated by President Partridge in the 1950s.

The three graduates of 1943 somberly shared their recollections of war. When asked about major changes, Vernell '43 replied:

I don't know how to answer that, because the whole experience was war. . . . Our whole three and a half years were colored by what the Nazis were doing. . . . I daresay that people who were in college during the Vietnam War are closer to me in terms of the way we viewed our college, although theirs was riotous and furious. Ours was much more internal, because we weren't fighting.

Later she added, "It was a different world. How were we ever going to get out of this?

There was a sense of real trauma, you know, on the nation's soul, and we were part of that." Audrey '43 (white) said:

I think we were kind of in a cocoon until we were struck that December 7, [1941] and it just changed our whole lives. . . . And it changed because it took all of the fellows, and some of them were killed, and it was a very difficult time. . . . What we did then was accelerate our program. . . . We condensed a whole semester because they needed especially us as math teachers. . . . Our class was very solid because we shared that, you see. . . . That shocked, mm-hmm. . . . You realize that in December of '41, we still had our junior and senior years to go. So it was really right in the middle.

And Marie '43 (white) noted that "the war brought about a lot of changes. There was [food] rationing. The males had to leave. You couldn't drive your car. . . . Life was very austere."¹⁷¹

They shortened the semesters and . . . my class was graduated in three parts. . . . The size of the student body diminished quite a bit during the war because of the fact that they were accelerating them and pushing them through that way, and the affiliation with the class was very much blurred and it was hard to distinguish what class you belonged to. . . . I think it was better . . . when they took the full four years and had all the other things that went with it. . . . You can't get as much in three years as you can in four years.

¹⁷¹ Although none of the subjects specifically mentioned the rationing of chocolate, the *Montclarion* reported with delight on 2/21/46: "Hurray! Chocolate bars are back!"

Thelma A '44 was a student during the war years also, but did not talk about that experience in connection with changes on campus. Marilyn '46 was present during that time as well, but did not recall any changes that took place. She explained that no black MSTC students were in military service. At another point in the interview, however, she discussed the discrimination displayed toward African Americans who *were* in the military, both during and after their service.

George '49 mentioned as a change the elementary education requirement that was instituted during his senior year, although it did not affect him. The students who were required to take those courses (all graduates of the 1950s) did not note it as a change, presumably because it had been a part of their program from the start.

Enrollment changes were identified by five participants. Audrey '43 (white) remembered that “there were higher enrollments before and after” World War II. Moe '49 (white) spoke of the greater enrollment following the war. “Some of the professors had trouble adjusting to [the influx of male students]—they really did.” Bernice '53 said “there probably were more blacks coming on, as I remember,” although she could not name them specifically. Ethel B '57 also thought there was a positive change in the openness to minority students. Yet Howard '56, while acknowledging a significant increase in general enrollment each year, observed:

With the black population, as far as minorities were concerned, we still were at that level where we weren't any kind of threat. . . . We reach a certain point, and I guess that's somewhere about 20 to 30%, then it's a whole different thing. . . . We could be tolerated because . . . when you have a small group like that, you tend to establish different kinds of relationships. . . . Different in that they try to get to know the individual.

The final type of change—in oneself—was mentioned by two students. Ethel M '48 reflected:

For me, probably just developing intellectually and, for instance, . . . not just accepting what had been fed to me as a child or expected of me in terms of

religion. It was that I actually could think about this and make decisions on my own. I really believe that was some kind of turning point in my intellectual development . . . questioning things more than just accepting everything that was doled out.

Juanita '51 also discovered “changes with me” and elaborated:

I found, I guess, that I could get very, very close to people from other backgrounds . . . and was able to expand my mind. I really learned. . . . I thought there would be more exposure, and there was . . . [because of] the whole New York metropolitan area kind of culture, which is much different, you must admit, from south Jersey! . . . It made me more well-rounded and more conscious perhaps about things in the world around me than had I stayed in south Jersey.

Roberta '57 summed up the sense on the Montclair campus during the 1950s by saying, “Aside from simmering racial discontent waiting to explode a decade later, the world was quiet.”

Contact With Classmates and College

Four participants said they had maintained no contact with Montclair State or with people they had met there. Matthew and Ethel B never felt a desire to attend a reunion. Katherine’s first teaching positions were in the South, “and when I came back to Newark to teach, why, I did not go back and visit Montclair State Teachers. I just had my own interests. In fact, I don’t think I was a very good alumna.” Norma lost contact with classmates when she went to Washington, DC.¹⁷² Others stayed in touch with one or more people, but not necessarily with the college itself. Marilyn, who became a librarian rather than a teacher, had never attended a reunion “because I didn’t associate myself with being a teacher.”

¹⁷² When Norma returned to the campus at the age of 86 for our interview, she was eager to know what had happened to 11 special classmates from 1933. Through the Alumni Association, she reestablished contact with some of them after a 64-year hiatus.

Vernell stayed in touch with one friend, and then renewed contact with the college itself after five decades had passed. “As a history person—50 years? Of course, I’m going to go back!” However:

I was so disappointed that so many people had died. It was almost funereal for me to go, and I said, “What the hell am I doing here?” I had gone over by bus and walked up that long hill and I had missed so many people, and those I saw were so wizened. I said oh, what’s going on?

But more representative were comments such as the following from Joyce:

There are a lot of people, individuals, that I would like to bring together and that I’ve seen since or heard about since. But [not] the school itself. . . . It’s only recently that I realized it was a university. . . . I was very proud of that. But basically it’s mostly people. I mean, the first thing I read is “That’s Life.”

Jeannette also mentioned “That’s Life,” a column in the alumni newspaper describing individual accomplishments. “I get the paper and make sure I read it, and first check the column that says 1959.” Reuben kept in touch with the members of his class, who sometimes held mini-reunions. Juanita said, “I’m still friendly with some of the folks that I went to school with there. I’m still in contact with them, to socialize.”

Four of the five black women from the class of 1953 held annual reunions (the fifth, Connie Williams, died not long after graduating). They included in their gatherings a 1952 graduate who was their sorority sister in Alpha Kappa Alpha. The four women—Gwen, Gerry, Bernice, and Thelma C—were all participants in this study. Bernice said, “And so many of the [other] people that I met here, we’re still friends.”

In contrast to the people who never returned to the campus, several interviewees were very active in alumni activities and other college events. Generally, they were associated with the university in capacities other than alumni status. All four white subjects, for example, were employed at Montclair. Audrey served as a faculty member, campus chaplain, Alumni Association representative to the MSU Board of Trustees,

member of the MSU Foundation Board, and co-chair of every five-year reunion since her class graduated in 1943.

Likewise, all four black subjects who were employed at Montclair maintained some connection. Jeannette was the assistant director of the summer Upward Bound project and a contributor to the Alumni Association. Reuben was the campus EOF director and, along with Florence, a 1978 recipient of the Distinguished Alumni Award. (Florence, like Audrey, served as the Alumni Association's representative to the college's Board of Trustees.) Roberta attended alumni events and served as an adjunct faculty member at the university. Alma and Tom, a long-time faculty member, participated in countless alumni and other activities. A fifth black participant, Juanita, was not employed at Montclair, but "when I was the state EOF director, of course, I had a lot of contact with the university in an official capacity. . . . I did get the Distinguished Alumni Award one year. . . . I've come up for a couple of meetings that we've had." At least three of the white subjects and one of the African American alumni/employees established scholarships or made other significant financial contributions to the university.

Other interviewees maintained membership in the Alumni Association and attended a reunion now and then. Lillian, for example, attended her twentieth reunion and "I continue to support them financially, but I don't have any other events that I recall going back to." However, she did retain ties with her roommate: "Forty years, we're still in touch [and] . . . I had another speech major that I was in contact with for a long time." Similarly, Patricia went to her twenty-fifth reunion, "but very little since then." However, she maintained contact with a couple of classmates. Jeannette said with regard to continued contact, "with Montclair, not that much." But concerning her two closest college friends, "both white students . . . we still keep in touch with each other."

Two black participants talked about post-Montclair incidents that related, respectively, to individual and institutional ties. Joyce reported:

In the early days, I went to some weddings. . . . [Following one wedding,] people in my class all went to the reception and I didn't realize that I hadn't been invited to the reception. And I wound up at the reception and I was very uncomfortable when I realized I didn't belong there at all. . . . But then over the years, I was the only black in a lot of situations, let me tell you.

Nevertheless, "I have seen or been in contact with most of the . . . people I was friendly with." At the time of our interview, she had recently located a classmate through a people-search service.

Ethel B had been a commuter during her student years, and regretted not having the opportunity to live on campus. She did not retain formal ties with the college, but related an amusing anecdote. "Well, I went there a couple of years when the NJEA had their leadership conferences, so I had the experience of staying on campus. But I didn't like it because we had to share showers! . . . That was a bubble that was burst!"

"Grades" for Education and Nonacademic Experiences

<i>N</i> =28	A+	A	A-	B+	B	B-	C+	C	D
Education	3	14	7	2	2				
Nonacademic	2	7	2	3	6	2	1	4	1

All 28 subjects gave high grades to their academic education at Montclair. Twenty-four of the 28 rated it A+, A (or excellent), or A-. The remaining four people rated it B+ or B, and one added, "maybe even an A."

Some amplified their responses. Frances, the College High School pupil, felt compelled to give "an A for the academic because, of course, we got the best professors. . . . We had the cream of the crop as far as instructors go." Katherine exclaimed, "I would give a straight A!" In Marilyn's words, "Definitely, from my point of view and from what I put into it and what I got back, I would say that it was A absolutely. It was

tops.” After considering the question, Juanita answered, “I’m a tough grader, so I would say an A-.” Roberta added, “Columbia Teachers College . . . had the name, but I don’t think it had a lot more than we did. . . . We had a good reputation, too. The school had an excellent reputation.”

Vernell said, “Academically, in terms of the four or five colleges that I’ve studied at, Montclair would probably be first or second. If it were second, it would be second to [Johns] Hopkins, but I was a different person.” Moe mused, “Well, let’s put it this way. In competition with students at NYU [where he got his master’s degree], I was ahead of all of them.” Bernice said, “I give Montclair very high marks for academic. I think that the education I got here was superior.”

Thelma C stated, “Montclair had more of a university atmosphere, even then. . . . The quality of teaching . . . I felt challenged and I enjoyed it.”¹⁷³ Moe (white) expressed a similar view with regard to the professional atmosphere in noting that President Sprague gave the faculty “absolute freedom in the classroom and protected them. And at Jersey City [State Teachers College], a professor had to sign in, in the morning, and sign out when he was finished. Here, that did not happen. It never happened.”

Some specifically lauded their preparation for a teaching career. Florence said, “I wouldn’t take anything for having had the training at Montclair Normal School.” Bernice thought she was prepared “very, very well. . . . It’s having not just teacher preparation, it’s those survey courses. It’s all of that. . . . It was a very, very rich experience for me and I’m grateful for having it—having had it and having been at Montclair.” Gwen said her preparation was “superb. It’s the only word I can use.

¹⁷³ It was very important for Thelma C to be intellectually challenged; she used the word four times during the interview in various contexts.

Superb in every area—in my major and my minor . . . and lesser things. Superior—excellent training.” Reuben stated, “I’ve proven that they taught me how to be a teacher.” Vernell remarked:

I think that they did a superb job. . . . I found that intellectually I was very stimulated. . . . When I came out of graduate school . . . I just felt alive and I think that Montclair was the only place that really did it. . . . I had a good sense of well-being. . . . I wasn’t at Princeton but I was in a community of bright people who liked learning, liked talking, liked reading the newspaper. . . . I can’t imagine, really, what my life would have been like if I had gone to a different school.

Howard observed, “I had gained enough skills to go out and make a living.” Thelma C especially appreciated one bit of preparation from Dr. Moffatt, who counseled: “Remember, when you get to the school, make friends with the custodian.” She took his advice and learned that “the custodian . . . was the person who ran the school next to the principal!” Joyce said: “I was aware of Montclair’s standing among the schools in the United States, and I think it was an excellent education, partly because it was liberal arts but it also included how-to, . . . and I felt rather well prepared to work.”

Juanita admitted, “I wasn’t too pleased that I was forced to take some of those elementary ed. courses. . . . We thought we were a little bit above elementary ed. courses! But as I said, I really enjoyed the English courses. I got a great background.” Yet Roberta, after saying, “I was so well prepared,” specifically cited the training she was obligated to receive in elementary education, observing that the college professors likewise had been forced to teach those courses. Despite her desire to teach high school and the professors’ desire to prepare high school teachers:

They did a good job, because I got some solid work there, too, and it was in that program that I learned how to develop my own kind of work. . . . It has served me well all of these years. So, I extol Montclair State anywhere I can. My

experience as far as training, and in my graduate work, was just outstanding. I don't think I had a course I didn't enjoy.¹⁷⁴

But Patricia, who described the education in her major as “wonderful,” nevertheless went on to say:

If I really break it down, I don't think I grasped—fully grasped—the true significance of teaching. . . . I don't think I had the subject matter truly under my belt and at my fingertips, and I felt that severely. I mean, I imagine it was presented, but maybe I just didn't pick up on it. I felt it should have been better.

Thelma C graded her preparation to teach in her major an A-, but she considered the elementary education to be lacking because it was “built on theory. And when you really got to the schools, it was a rude awakening!” George made a similar observation with regard to the education courses for the training of high school teachers, which he believed

were primarily taught by people who had never taught in public schools. And they emphasized the fact that if you had a good lesson plan and you were an interesting teacher, you wouldn't have any trouble. Wow! Did I find out that wasn't true. . . . They gave you techniques for ideal situations. They did not give you techniques for difficulty. And my first job in the junior high school was in a poor area of the city with really tough students.

Marilyn likewise was critical of the education courses.

Those horrible courses that we had to take at Montclair—all those education courses . . . they didn't help me one bit in learning how to—I thought if I could observe a good teacher, I would learn how to teach. But I didn't have enough control of the students to really feel comfortable even doing that much.

Jeannette had graded her education a B+ and offered this criticism:

I think if Montclair itself was more involved in the problems of the students—the students that we were going to teach, both urban and suburban—I think that would have helped the practice teacher and later the full-time teacher meet the problems that he was going to encounter when he became a teacher.

¹⁷⁴ Actually, Roberta had mentioned earlier in the interview not liking one of the forced elementary education courses that later stood her in good stead. This is an excellent example of how an overall impression can be somewhat different from certain specifics of a situation.

Like Patricia, who limited her high rating to courses in her major, two other respondents qualified their answers. Gerry gave an A “except for the one science class.” George gave “absolute A” to most courses, but “we will not talk about” the education courses.

Four interviewees stressed the importance of preparation in classroom discipline for launching a successful teaching career. As noted above, students were taught “that if you were a good teacher, there was no discipline problem” (*La Campana* 1956). For some African Americans, the real world of teaching revealed the necessity of turning the phrase around; that is, if one took care of the discipline problem, one could concentrate on good teaching. Bernice described her first job in Cleveland, where all of the students except one were white.

They were raising Cain. And I went home that afternoon and I guess for the first three or four days, I said, “Oh, my God, can I do this? I can’t take this.” The discipline, you know. And I went down on the lake and sat . . . and something said, “You have to go in there and show them who’s boss!” They thought I had lost my mind, I’m sure! It was a huge class because in those years there were 40, 45 kids in a class. Shortage of teachers. Well, honey, I stomped my foot in there and they thought I had lost my mind. Everything was fine after that!¹⁷⁵

Marilyn was practice teaching with “smart, bright kids” who “realized I wasn’t that old and they were going to shove it to me, you know? And I had absolutely no sense of how to keep control with them at first. . . . I knew my subject, but I didn’t know how to give it to them.” Jeannette said, “If you don’t insist on it [discipline], you’re not going to get it.” Florence stated, “If you cannot discipline your children, forget it.” In her case, the training in disciplining pupils was excellent at the Montclair State Normal School, but

¹⁷⁵ Juanita remembered that one teacher at MSTC “didn’t last because of the kinds of things that he would say to the students; the administration threw him out. He would say things like, ‘When you get into the classroom, make certain that the class knows you’re the boss.’” Yet that philosophy is exactly what Bernice used to gain the discipline needed to teach her students.

she related a sad episode in the teaching career of a colleague who had not enjoyed such outstanding preparation.

Octavia Warren Catlett '22, who was interviewed by another writer, described to him the terror of being confronted in her third job by a class of white students who taunted and cursed her. She then told them a concocted story about having five big brothers and lots of cousins who were police detectives, and dared them to give her trouble. "You can't say things like that these days," she admitted. But it provided the structure and discipline she needed for teaching effectively. "They got the message and thought I was pretty good" (Gresh 4). She remained at the school for 30 years and often took groups of students to football games at Montclair State.

There was less unanimity in grading on the nonacademic side. Compared with 24 who gave top marks to their education, only 11 subjects marked their out-of-class experiences A- or higher. Another 11 people marked their nonacademic experiences B+, B, or B-. Six people graded them at C+, C, and even D.

Reasons given for lower marks on the nonacademic side included the lack of dating opportunities, decisions not to become involved in the social life or to limit involvement to certain activities, inability to become involved due to commuting, and insecurity or not fitting in. Thelma C said, "It wasn't very exciting not having many black men around! . . . But it made us work harder in our social lives!" Patricia and Joyce made similar comments.

Howard gave a B grade based on a personal decision to limit his involvement to athletics due to a heavy work schedule. Otherwise, he probably would have given an A. Frances rated her nonacademic experiences in College High School "maybe a C. . . . It was bearable." She mentioned feeling hurt at not being "able to really be friends, you know, 100%." She chose "to meet my needs for social and I guess emotional things

somewhere else. . . . I know it was a barrier that I created just as well as anybody else.” Still, she added, “I enjoyed high school.” For Katherine, the nonacademic side was only “passable” because “I didn’t become a part of the social life, the social activities there. See, I wasn’t a stranger, but I was independent. I just didn’t involve myself.” In her case, the dean of women had cautioned Katherine’s father not to permit her to socialize with the (white) male students “because we wouldn’t want to have a problem on the campus.” Her reaction was to distance herself. Thelma A’s decision to stay apart was based on a sense of not fitting in as a transplanted southerner.

Maybe my experiences would have been better on the nonacademic side if I had put myself into it more, you see. Maybe I held myself back and felt self-conscious or what have you. So in grading them at a C, perhaps I’m grading myself as a C. That’s the way I would interpret that.

Marie (white) also felt herself to be on the sidelines, but for a different reason. “I didn’t have the great charisma and the great acceptance among my peers that . . . some of the others had. I was too much of a student.”¹⁷⁶

Nonresident students lamented their absence from campus after class hours. Commuter Ethel B declared, “I’d give it a D, because I didn’t have any nonacademic experiences.” Gwen lived in a residence hall for one semester, but spent long hours commuting the rest of the time. She could only give a C to her nonacademic experiences because “of my not being there a lot of the time to participate in a lot of things that went on—which I don’t know what they are, but I’m sure there are other things.” Ethel M gave a B grade and said, “I think a commuter’s experience is so very different from

¹⁷⁶ Three other subjects used the same phrase. Audrey (white) said, “I was a student. But I also loved dancing and was very social.” Thus, her academic focus did not inhibit her socially the way it did Marie. When Lillian said, “I was a student,” she meant that her primary mission was to do well academically. Yet, as a resident, she had more opportunities for social involvement than did Marie. Finally, Jeannette said, “Remember all students out here were conscientious. We were the kind that studied, did our work, did our homework. We were students, so to that extent we fit.” She went on to imply that black students fit in the classrooms, but not necessarily in all aspects of the social life.

someone who lives on campus. . . . There was no real social life. The social life was what you created with your friends.”

Yet Juanita, a resident, made a similar comment. She could give

a B at the most, because most of the social life we made on our own, with our own groups. And that may have been a product of the times. . . . Prior to the Educational Opportunity Fund program—and I don’t think this is just true of New Jersey; I think nationwide—institutions were not that interested in or adept in providing student services for those kinds of student experiences. . . . I don’t think that necessarily had to do with your race.

Nevertheless, Juanita concluded, “If I had to do it all over again, I would probably go to Montclair.”

For some people, the question was difficult to answer because their nonacademic lives were almost nonexperiences. Marilyn gave a grade “between a B and a C, I guess. I don’t really remember that much about it now.” Vernell said:

Socially, for that period, I would have given it a B+. If I had to look at it again, I would say C+, B—the social dimensions were not exceptional. Met some interesting people, but I didn’t have a great time, although I think that maybe if that were available, I wouldn’t have taken advantage of it. I think it was just too much of a kind of Protestant inhibition—you know, reserved.

And Ethel M observed, “I don’t think anything negative was happening to us. I don’t think a whole lot positive was going on.” Yet at the end of the interview, she reflected that her memories of Montclair were good. “I felt, in retrospect, a lot of what didn’t happen I truly believe was because I was not allowing or not participating for whatever reasons—and mostly because I was, at that time, a pretty introverted young person.”

However, there were some enthusiastic responses as well. Regarding her husband’s nonacademic experience, Alma reported, “Tom’s would certainly be highly positive!” George said, “My extracurricular—A+. It was wonderful.” Reuben stated, “For providing me with a laboratory in order to grow as an individual, I would give them

an A.” Bernice exclaimed, “I guess I’d have to give that an A-! I mean, I liked it.” And Matthew, who gave only a B to his academic education, rated his nonacademic experiences an A,

because I loved every minute of it. I had a ball. . . . I would give myself and my maturity probably a C- because I wasn’t attentive to the job that I should have been doing at that time. I was more interested in having a good time. As far as the college is concerned, that’s not their fault.

Thelma C summed up her perspective on the educational and social opportunities at Montclair as follows:

You have to bring more than your presence, whether you bring it to a career, a marriage, even a relationship. . . . I think at Montclair, I brought the desire to learn here. And Montclair accommodated me by offering . . . a high quality education. . . . As I have moved about through the states, . . . when I say Montclair, especially historians or social studies people, . . . they recognize Montclair right away.

Choose Teaching Again?

The final question was whether or not subjects would choose a teaching career once again if they could start over, knowing then what they know now. Nineteen participants said yes, six said no, and one said “sometimes yes, sometimes no.” (Frances and Marilyn were not asked the question because they never taught.)

The seven who did not say yes indicated that their preferred careers would have been in acting, law, counseling, motherhood, corporate administration, or any more lucrative occupation. Thelma A pointed out that “you can’t know then what you know now. It just doesn’t work that way, so I would probably still be a teacher.” Nevertheless, if it had been possible, “I would like to have been an actress and an entertainer. That’s

definitely my field, but it's too late!"¹⁷⁷ Marie (white) said, "If I knew then what I know now, I wouldn't have gone into teaching. I would have gone directly for counseling" (from which she ultimately retired). Gerry "would have chosen law" and Juanita—the "sometimes yes, sometimes no" respondent—"would also probably have gotten a law degree . . . to do some of the legal aspects of education."¹⁷⁸ Patricia mused:

I'm not sure I should have. . . . Now that I'm retired, I think that I just would like to have stayed at home and raised my children. But in that era, they told us we could have it all, which you couldn't. You can't do it all. . . . I think that I should have settled for less money and focused on being a good mother.

Howard "would have been some kind of corporate executive, president, CEO, something of that type." And if Reuben could start over:

I'd probably select a career in which I could get very rich so that then I could do more things economically. But having done this for almost 40 years now, I consider myself probably just as rich in another way . . . Many of the students that I impacted on in the last 40 years . . . teach . . . they are now lawyers and doctors. . . . I didn't think about becoming a doctor or a lawyer or what have you. I thought about becoming a good citizen and a person that was working to be able to do something to take care of a wife and a family, and I've done that anyway.¹⁷⁹

But the vast majority of interviewees would have selected a teaching career once again, with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Audrey (white) said, "Yes with an exclamation mark!" Moe (white) stated, "Yes, except I would have started earlier!" Katherine replied, "Yes, indeed!" Alma thought her husband Tom "would give an

¹⁷⁷ Vernell was an upper class student when Thelma A came to Montclair, and described the younger woman as "very pretty and very retreating." Thelma A described herself as "shy-like." Thus, it is curious that, in retrospect, she would have selected acting and entertainment as a profession. Perhaps the experience of being in front of a class increased her confidence. In an earlier part of the interview, she said: "I think that's why I chose teaching—because you have a stage every day!"

¹⁷⁸ Two subjects who said they *would* choose teaching again, Joyce and Bernice, actually did enter the legal field after or in addition to their teaching work.

¹⁷⁹ A very complimentary article about Reuben in the *Newark News* (7/17/65) titled "Teacher has fun performing job" begins: "Reuben Johnson is a man who loves his job and Mr. Johnson's job is teaching." He taught science, "but I think I'd enjoy teaching anything, as long as I could be with kids, helping them to learn and helping them to understand how they feel about education and about themselves. That's a job worth living for."

enthusiastic ‘yes.’” Florence said, “I think it was always teaching. . . . Yes, I would.” Irv (white) answered simply, “Yes.”

Bernice said, “I can say without any reservation, I taught 38 years and I loved every minute of it. . . . Mm-hmm, yeah. I loved it. I’ve loved it from day one.”

Similarly, Matthew stated:

I definitely would choose teaching. . . . There is nothing else that I could have done that could have been as rewarding to me as teaching. I just loved it. I loved every minute of it. When I became an administrator, that’s when I started to think about retirement.

Ethel B, on the other hand, thought she “would choose teaching as a first level and then move into different areas of education, maybe in supervision, administration, guidance type of things.” Gwen replied, “Mm-hmm, definitely. I think we need good teachers now more than ever, and I was a good teacher! And yeah, I would do it again.”

Thelma C also was pleasantly surprised at how good she was at teaching:

I probably would if I were teaching in the ’50s or ’60s. . . . It was good for me. . . . We were a matched pair. . . . I didn’t know I would be such a good teacher. . . . You have to be very honest with them, you know, because they’re not doing the right things. So it makes you be creative. I enjoyed it. I have no regrets. . . . I’m glad I did what I did. . . . It was very exciting!

Joyce similarly said, “I really was a master teacher. . . . I’m not bragging; I’m just saying what it evolved to be. And I would say that Montclair had a great deal to do with that. I was very comfortable in the classroom.” As for her selection of a profession if she could begin anew, Joyce explained:

If I had spent my years as a teacher of a high school or elementary ed., I would have been out of teaching a long time ago. But special ed. gave me real added incentive to be a teacher. . . . I think that Montclair, in spite of the fact that [special education] was not its area of expertise, really gave me a great deal.

Some subjects, despite their assertion that they would choose teaching again, did express reservations. Alma said, “I guess I would hesitate, and yet I’d be interested and concerned, so maybe I would go ahead anyway!” George explained that “financially, it

was not a great choice. Personally, it was a wonderful choice.” Ethel M “probably would,” but she added: “It was largely out of convenience. The college was here. It was affordable. I could get there without a car.” Juanita, who had answered “sometimes yes, sometimes no,” elaborated: “By and large, I enjoyed teaching as a career. . . . I feel it’s a very worthwhile career. And I doubt if I would trade it for anything else.”

Like several others, Jeannette was attracted to “either teaching or law.” But she was able to satisfy both desires through teaching because “in administration there is so much law to be involved with.” She concluded, “I have absolutely no regrets for going into teaching and administration. . . . While I am retired officially, I expect to be doing something in education. I cannot sit around and do nothing. I expect to be working with young people.”

Lillian initially was quite clear: “Absolutely. Yes, right. I would do it again. . . . It was really a great foundation, a great opportunity, a wonderful place to be.” Yet she also remarked, “But I might hold out and just say, ‘Let me think about that because maybe there is something else.’” Norma also had mixed feelings:

There are many, many opportunities now that didn’t exist then. . . . And had I been brighter than I am, I might, but I don’t know. I got into teaching and I loved it. . . . Yes, I think I would do just the same thing I did if I had to do it over again.

Vernell tried to explain her confusion over the choice of a career.

I think if I had to live my life over again, . . . I would have chosen something—I certainly wouldn’t have worked on a history of southwest Africa as a doctoral . . . dissertation. But I think that I’m not clear. I’m not really as clear as I’d like to be. Part of it is what was available, you know, what kind of star was reachable, although there was some genuine excitement about teaching. . . . I can’t think of any other profession that I would have been better at. . . . I think that probably teaching was the best thing for me, until I . . . went into very broad administration, and I’m trying to analyze why I enjoyed that, too. And I think it was because I had reached the point where I believed that I could enjoy working with adults in the same way that I had enjoyed working with kids.

Roberta thought that “back then, I probably would choose it again.” But the state’s imposition of tedious paperwork and other requirements on teachers who would prefer to spend their time with pupils has “created tension and stress among teachers that is reproduced in the classrooms” to the point that she would not enter the profession as a novice teacher today.

Unstructured Recollections

During the course of the interviews, and specifically at the end, subjects were encouraged to talk about anything else concerning their lives at Montclair State Teachers College, apart from the structured questions, that they wished to share. Some of those comments have been incorporated into earlier sections of this chapter, as appropriate. The miscellaneous observations follow.

External Support Systems

In Chapter II, “Historical Background,” it was noted that Pennsylvania had an Association of Teachers of Colored Children in the first quarter of the 1900s. New Jersey, too, had its Organization of Teachers of Colored Children. According to a 1932 report of the Interracial Committee of the New Jersey Conference of Social Work:

In each community with a large number of Negro teachers, this organization has set up study centers of which there are ten in the state today. Each year the executive committee outlines a uniform program for each center and at the conclusion of the study period, an annual conference is held for a general discussion of the various social and educational problems which have arisen during the term. (38)

Florence was the only subject who mentioned the organization, and she was a member during her tenure in the black borough of Lawnside in south Jersey from 1928 to 1937:

You see, that's when we were not integrated into the larger New Jersey Education Association. But we always went to the meetings of the New Jersey Education and we gave our reports on what we were doing in our schools. . . . In later years, even while I was at Lawnside, we . . . sort of disbanded.

The members, said Florence, were "basically from south Jersey. Because the [black] teachers, if there were any up here at the time (and there were some), joined the NJEA."

In addition, Florence joined a sorority for black women in education, all of whom were normal school graduates in the beginning. It was called

the National Sorority of Phi Delta Kappa. We had to put National Sorority in there, so as not to be confused with the Phi Delta Kappa. . . . Our sorority, which was based in Camden, the center for people in our area, had a black history program. It was one of our projects to have a group of high school students study black history.

In later years, the main support system for black female teachers in this study seemed to be Alpha Kappa Alpha, a sorority that attracted three-quarters of the eligible subjects following the 1947 establishment of an undergraduate chapter in Newark. AKA was discussed earlier in this chapter in the section titled "Social Life."

Quota System

Three interviewees asserted the existence of a quota system for the admission of African American students. Florence '28 recalled: "As a matter of fact, there were two black people a year [or a semester, as she indicated elsewhere]. . . . Everybody knows those people who were there." When asked if she thought the quota was school policy or coincidence, she replied: "It was a policy of Montclair State." Questioned further about whether or not she had been informed of that policy when she was admitted, she said only: "You know, this is the way it is. You know what it's going to be. So if you want to take advantage of it, you take it." The persistent interviewer continued, "So when you applied to go to Montclair State, you went in person for an interview and they saw that

you were black?” She answered firmly, “They have ways. They don’t have to look at you. They knew more about me before I got there—well, you know, they got the records from the high school.”

Thelma C ’53 said, “I think in the state system there was a quota for black students. . . . It seemed to be that within this quota, we’re going to try to hit people in different parts of the state.” And Joyce ’56 claimed:

I knew that Montclair—or maybe the state schools—had a quota system. I knew that. Everybody knew that. I think there weren’t more than about six—less than 10 black people in my class. . . . I don’t know where that came from, whether it was the school itself or a state edict or whatever. I’m not aware of that, but I do know there was a quota system. . . . I would say if I resented anything, I would have resented that.

Indeed, there were two black students in Florence’s normal school class and there were six in Joyce’s college class, as they recalled. However, the concept of a certain number of African Americans admitted per year is not borne out by the evidence. In fact, there were five black graduates in 1918, including Florence’s sister. During the period under study, the numbers fluctuated from zero to seven, without any discernible pattern. The higher numbers (six or seven) all occurred from 1949 on, but that period also included three years when there were only two or three.

Philosophy/Coping/Getting Through

A few participants offered their personal philosophies of dealing with life. Alma spoke for herself and her husband Tom in stating “something that almost any black person who wants to get anywhere has to decide”—namely, “that you’re not going to be turned around and you’re not going to be daunted. You know what you’re there for and you do it!”

Bernice mentioned that Connie Williams, her friend and classmate from sixth grade through college, lived with her grandmother in New Jersey while her father lived in Virginia. She was envious of Bernice's secure home life.

Connie had a love/hate relationship with me as a lot of my friends did!
[laughter] But she used to say to me, "Well, you always had everything!" I said, "What do you mean? What do I have?" She was a gorgeous girl. I said, "You've got this great figure and all these clothes. What are you talking about?" And she says, "Well, you've always had—your father has always been there for you and you've always been able to—" What she was talking about, what I think she was talking about, is freedom. There's a sense of freedom about me. . . . I would do things that nobody else would do because they're, "Oh, Bernice, you're not going to do that." Why not? Some of that is because my father said, you know, whatever. I could do no wrong. Whatever!

She continued reflecting on her father's influence on her development.

He did not say "if" you come out [of college], he says "when." That means a lot. And I heard it. My father learned that by being in service for the Jewish families. This is the way they treated their kids and he treated us just the way they treated their kids. . . . See, I've taught kids of all stripes over the years and when people say, "Well, you know, he's black and so and so," I say, "Listen. Jewish kids succeed because their parents are telling them from the day they come out of the womb that this is what you're going to do and that you can do it." . . . School is very important to them and they make that very clear to them. And if black kids have the same . . . they could do the same thing. . . . There has to be some ability, of course, and some other things. But it's not about what color you are. It's not about even where you come from. It's what you believe. It's your belief system. And I was lucky enough to be in a home where there was a belief system that you can do whatever you want to do. So it never occurs to me not to do it.

Nevertheless, Bernice was selective in what she chose to do; she did not walk blindly into situations that might have caused her rejection. "What you learned to do is not to put yourself into situations that you know are fraught with whatever. You know, it's to protect—you cover yourself."

Patricia, more quiet than the gregarious Bernice, revealed that she had suffered a mini-stroke not long before our interview. "The doctor doesn't want me to drive just yet. So, you know, things have always gone well for me." The surprising juxtaposition of the two sentences was typical of Patricia's apparently upbeat and optimistic nature. In a

follow-up telephone call, she began by saying with genuine conviction that she was just fine. Later in the conversation I learned that, even as we spoke, she was lying sick in bed but feeling better than she had the day before. She chose to see the sunny side.

Jeannette explained her philosophy for coping with unfamiliar situations, such as her freshman year at college. She felt “strange, in a strange world. . . . You needed a road map [to determine] who’s who—you know, you try to be friendly with everybody. I tried to speak to everybody, so that I could get a couple of friends and I did.”

Discrimination

Several subjects talked about experiences of discrimination apart from Montclair State and their ways of handling them. George asserted, “I’ve done what I wanted to. I’ve gone where I wanted to. I’ve lived where I wanted to.” Then he explained how he developed that determination in childhood.

There was a movie house in Roselle. . . . And we came home one day and told my mother . . . that when we went to the movies, they made us move to the side. And my mother was furious. So that Thursday night or something, everybody went to the movies—my mother, my father, my sister, my brother and I sat in the center. And the man came up and he said to my mother, “You’re going to have to move.” And she said, “Are you going to move me?” And my father said, “Are you going to try to move my wife?” And he went away. And my parents said, “You are never to sit on the side.” . . . I wasn’t ashamed or whatever people feel. I didn’t feel any of that. I belonged where I wanted to go. Whether they wanted me or not, I belonged there, that’s all.

He concluded, “My Montclair experience helped me to affirm that—that I belonged anywhere I was capable of going.”

Joyce mused: “I would say that throughout my years, I have been discriminated against more as a woman than I have as a black person—not very much of either, but still it was more as a woman.” Her classmate, Howard, had a decidedly racial discriminatory experience in 1961 in suburban Bloomfield, New Jersey.

In those times, they were redlining where blacks could buy, so I went and got my real estate license to find out what the process was. After I found out, I bought a house and a six-foot cross was burned, and that was not only in the media locally, but nationally also.

His reaction was typical of his method for dealing with other matters—jumping right into the heart of the situation. “I became chairman of the Civil Rights Commission and . . . head of the Better Human Relations Council . . . in Bloomfield.”

Alma talked about social interaction among teachers, concluding that although black teachers socialized more with each other than with white teachers,

also they socialized and mingled with others. I would say that it’s just the wise thing to do. It’s not a good idea to isolate and segregate and so forth. And if you want to have all of the experience that goes with being what you are, why, you have to be in it.

Matthew had a different perspective than many of his colleagues.

It’s very difficult for me to think back as an African American student. Although I have always known that I was black, it’s never been a problem for me—not before I went to Montclair, not while I was at Montclair, not since I left Montclair. . . . Until the ’60s, I just never thought about race.

He then recounted his son’s experience at a New Jersey community college. “Right away he was invited into the black organization. I’m not sure that that is the way to go. I almost believe that what we should be having is less separation and more integration—true integration.”

Thoughts About Teaching

A number of participants commented on teaching itself and changes in the profession over time, particularly as they relate to African Americans. Florence ’28 reported:

I have seen so many changes in the world outside—not talking about Montclair State—where black people are concerned. So many of the children of children, of the ones I knew as children, have been able to do a lot more because their parents were able to do more for them. It boiled down to economics.

Gwen '53 said simply, "I enjoyed my teaching so much. I loved it . . . including the counseling. Sometimes I used to have kids come up to my house and teach them Mexican dances."

Ethel B '57 remembered:

We weren't allowed to bring any commercial material in at all. And now you can go to the store and buy everything commercially. We had to make everything. . . . And then the teachers' guide that they give you, everything is laid out for you! . . . [We had to] spend more time preparing.

Patricia '56 was dismayed by the appearance of "ebonics" in the schools. "I think that's a step backwards. . . . We didn't take steps like that. This was a forward movement." She was referring to her generation of black teachers who aimed to integrate into the general academic culture rather than to create a separate curriculum for African American students.

Juanita '51 emphasized the need for academic achievement.

I had always experienced academic success. I think that's very important. . . . Particularly in today's minority communities—there is not enough stress . . . on academic success in the early ages. . . . If your child gets good grades, you can rest assured the self-esteem is going to be there. . . . If you are a good student, there's a way that you're treated as opposed to if you're a poor student.

Frances '52 (CHS) spoke in the same vein.

I'm not an integrationist in the terms of feeling that . . . we wanted black kids to be with white kids, but we wanted black kids to have the same educational opportunities. . . . You don't have to be with whites. You have to have the opportunity. You have to have the same books. You have to have the same level of expectations. You have to have the same level of teaching. If you're bright, you need a teacher that can handle bright students.

Jeannette '59 reflected on the best way to reach *all* students: "I think that's the kind of feeling you want to give to every student—that we can't run the school without you."

Bernice '53 noted that she had experienced a great deal of mentoring from faculty members and observed: "So many kids need that and they don't get it." She tried to

provide mentoring for as many as possible, believing that “to those to whom much is given, much is expected. That’s the way I feel.”

Two subjects raised the specter of state intrusion in recent years. Roberta ’51 lamented:

The testing and certification and threat—there’s no other word for it—of takeover if certain things don’t happen have really affected education in New Jersey today and created tension and stress among teachers that is reproduced in the classrooms. The score, the test score, has become the bottom line. And I was in teaching when that did not exist and I know what a joy it could be. It can still be a joy today, but you have to have some fortitude and strength to get around structure and to be able to look at what they tell you to say every minute in the classroom and make it your own, to do your own thing. Many of the new people can’t do that.

Ethel B ’57 concurred. “Sometimes you wonder when you’re going to find time to teach! So we have to sort of squeeze what the state wants and still do the academics.”

Thoughts About Montclair Over the Years

Four of the subjects who continued their association with Montclair State through employment observed changes over a long period of time. Alma ’43 (MA), whose husband Tom ’40 was a faculty member, said:

In both colleges [Montclair State and Newark State], as the years passed, the increase in numbers of population and with that an increase in the numbers of black students in the population, certainly had to make a difference. Then, I would say both colleges endeavored to offer more majors. . . . [They] changed greatly from being teacher preparation institutions to being general and liberal education. . . . It’s important, and for the community it’s important, to be able to train students in a variety of disciplines and prepare them for a variety of occupations.

Marie ’43 (white) remembered when

the civil rights movement came along and . . . they started all these different programs here at the college [such as] . . . the Equal Opportunity Fund program, and there was a tremendous push to admit the minority students at that time. The 1960s is when it really occurred. You did not have that in . . . the ’30s, the ’40s, and the ’50s. It came along and really was very noticeable and a very strong movement that bore results in the ’60s.

Reuben '59 reflected:

I think that I've always had . . . this sort of bittersweet relationship with Montclair State. . . . I didn't feel or see or perceive the racist aspect as an undergraduate. But when I came back as an alum and also as an administrator, then for some reason I sort of felt that on the campus, that there was this racist undercurrent.

But Roberta '57, who was an adjunct faculty member at the time of the interview, felt differently.

I just have to repeat that it was wonderful for me. . . . I just remember such a positive experience that, to this day, if I set foot on campus, I feel something very positive. I just love being up here and walking around. It's almost like it's a home away from home.

Joyce '56 recognized that she had changed and times had changed, to the point that:

I suppose I would see Montclair very differently if it were the same [now] as when I went. . . . If it stayed the same, I probably—I would be more tuned in to look for some of the things you asked me about. But certainly it had no impact on me as far as I was concerned—at that time. So I would imagine I found my comfort zone there . . . in size and enough friends and enough interests to occupy me.

Three participants expressed their amazement over the president at the time of the interviews. Vernell '43 asked, "This is the second black president, isn't it? Oh, my God, I never thought this would happen—never in a million years, because there was not a black professor there. . . . Even the maintenance men I don't think were black."¹⁸⁰

Bernice '53 exclaimed, "I was shocked to find out there was a black president! . . . I almost fainted! Dr. Sprague was here when I was here. I mean, we would never have even in our wildest dreams thought of a black president at Montclair." And Gwen '53 mused, "Now, Montclair is full of black students and a black president, huh? I laugh every time I get my alumni paper. I say, 'Boy, things have really changed.'"

¹⁸⁰ Albert Terry, a black custodian who was on the staff of the normal school when its doors were opened in 1908, retired during Vernell's college career.

Final Thoughts

Vernell '43 offered these thoughts about her experiences at Montclair State

Teachers College:

It was a marvelous experience for me and, except for Hopkins, the best part of my education in a sense of the richness. Maybe it was because I was young. The thing is that there was a vibrance there and there was a depth that was very, very exciting, and I never felt there a part of my undergraduate education was lacking. . . . It was halcyon days. I still look very, very affectionately back on those days.

George '49 reflected on the whole of his college experience as follows.

My mother would get furious with me! If I were sick, I would not stay home. . . . I never missed class if I could help it. I'm one of those people who liked college—I mean, all of it. . . . I learned a lot about myself and gained a lot of confidence in myself from being at Montclair.

Patricia '56 summed up her feelings about her college years by saying:

It wasn't like it is now, where in many cases there are chips on a shoulder. . . . At least, I wasn't aware of it. It was easier. It was more congenial. . . . You weren't always looking for something to be wrong. If it was wrong, all right, we'd state it was wrong as we saw it, and you know, attempt to correct it. But things are very different now.

Bernice '53, raconteur par excellence, characteristically wrapped up the whole of her experience with a peal of laughter. "There have been a lot of twists and turns in my life and they've all been great!" And her friend, Thelma C '53, a more reserved woman, stated: "I've enjoyed the interview. You've made me sort of think back. It's hard to recall so much of the things that happened and the feelings, but I really had good feelings when I was here."

Conclusion

The past has continuing relevance for the present as people "live out the assumptions of our époque in the most mundane aspects of our daily lives" while often

taking the assumptions for granted (G. Tuchman 313). Those assumptions combine with our experiences to form the persons we become, and we in turn influence the next generation who did not personally encounter the same life-shaping events. Patterns resulting from one set of circumstances are carried into other life situations, where the bearer may rely on traditions or ingrained beliefs that are no longer meaningful or beneficial. As stated in 1947 by President Harry Truman's Commission on Higher Education: "It is wisdom in education to use the past selectively and critically, in order to illumine the pressing problems of the present" (6).

To that end, the final chapter, "Discussion," will analyze the comments of the 28 interviewees and others in terms of the five major concepts identified in Chapter III, "Conceptual Framework": racism, status attainment, community, integration (academic and social), and persistence/retention.

CHAPTER VI

DISCUSSION

Introduction

This final chapter addresses the five major theoretical concepts—racism, status attainment, community, integration, and persistence/retention—and changes in the status of African Americans at Montclair State Teachers College during the period 1927 through 1957. These concepts are discussed mainly in terms of the participants' responses to interview questions. Information about the issues is drawn also from additional primary and secondary sources including students who were not participants, relatives of deceased students, accounts by African Americans at other institutions, yearbooks, newspapers, and other documents.

Reliability and Validity

In Chapter IV, "Method," reliability was defined as "the consistency with which an individual will tell the same story about the same events on a number of different occasions" (Hoffman 69). Reliability in this study was gauged by asking the same questions in slightly different ways during the interview and following up when necessary with visits or telephone calls.

The few occasions of inconsistency appear attributable to the "treachery of memory" and do not materially affect the study. As an example, one subject stated: "My first job actually was in February of 1955. February 8th." Later she said, "I remember the date was February 7th." Another person recalled someone's name as "Martha" at one

time and “Miranda” at another. A third subject said early in the interview that she did not like one of the forced elementary education courses. Later she said, “I don’t think I had a course I didn’t enjoy.” This may be less an example of unreliability than a demonstration of how an overall impression can be somewhat different from certain specifics of a situation. In general, when questions were asked in slightly different ways, they elicited the same basic answer with perhaps a new slant in response to the variation in wording.

Validity is “the degree of conformity between the reports of the event and the event itself as recorded by other primary resource material such as documents, photographs, diaries, and letters” (Hoffman 69). An example of the high degree of validity in respondents’ comments can be provided with regard to the tuition charge. Most subjects who gave a firm answer accurately recalled the tuition of \$100 per year. The four people who admitted to guessing were over by amounts ranging from \$50 to “a few hundred dollars” annually—substantial errors, but they began by saying the amounts were guesses. Seven others preferred giving no response to venturing a guess and being wrong about the amount. No one blithely made a claim that was incorrect.

Yet, in the area of validity, too, there were a few discrepancies. For example, one subject recalled: “When we graduated, the normal school had its first college classes in the fall of 1928.” Actually, the first college classes arrived in the fall of 1927. When asked if she could have applied to continue her studies in the new college in order to earn a bachelor’s degree to supplement her normal school diploma, she replied: “No, they had made no provision to include the normal school. . . . We were given our diplomas, our certification, and told to go out and teach.” In actuality, more than half of the first college graduates were normal school graduates as well.

In another case, a female subject said she received all A’s and B’s. However, a review of her course transcript shows four C’s. A male subject asserted, “I probably had

160 or 170 semester hours when I graduated.” In fact, he had 149. Two subjects described the situation of a professor who was forced to leave due to having surpassed the state’s retirement age. They overestimated her age by three and eight years, respectively. Nevertheless, the *essential* facts of the case were correctly stated in that the teacher did exceed the mandatory retirement age and was compelled to depart.

Numerous less significant incidences of low validity could be cited, such as assigning a slightly wrong name to a club or altering a few letters in a professor’s name. Overall, the objective components of interviewees’ statements were remarkably accurate when judged against primary and secondary documents and the comments of others, especially making some allowance for an interval of 40 to 70 years since the events occurred. Both the reliability and validity of the statements of the 28 respondents in the present study seem to be high.

Racism

It was noted in the discussion of the concept of racism in Chapter III that its meaning evolves over time. In fact, one of the interviewees, Marilyn, said explicitly that the term “racist wasn’t being used at that time.” In this study, I wished to determine the effects of racism—however defined—on the accessibility and quality of early education, of teacher education, and of teaching careers for one group of African Americans. Unavoidably, the issue of racism in noncollege life is interwoven with its impact on educational and professional opportunities.

On the whole, black students at Montclair did perceive themselves to be the targets of both individual and institutional racism—the former defined as intended personal actions and the latter as the unintended consequences of systemic inequality.

But most of the racism was not directly connected with the college. Rather, the institutional “system” was society as a whole. Of course, there were exceptions.

During 1915 and 1916, at least seven black women began their studies at the Montclair State Normal School (one withdrew after a month). According to the daughter of one of those students, Ethel Van de Vere, she felt discrimination both at the school and in her later teaching, despite her own success and that of her classmates. She believed the faculty “set blacks up for failure.”¹⁸¹ An African American at the Trenton State Normal School similarly said: “They tried in state teachers college to get us ousted before we got to graduation time” (Devore 226). That sentiment was echoed in part many years later by a white professor who told Bernice to cut the card playing and get into her books because “they expect you to fail.” “They” may have been certain professors or the society at large.

Ethel Van De Vere’s purported discriminatory experience did not seem to be typical. One of her black classmates, Rosemary Pearman, practice taught at the racially mixed Glenfield elementary school in the town of Montclair. When the regular teacher was out for more than a month due to illness, no substitute was hired. Instead, Rosemary assumed full responsibility for the class. To a cynic, the school board simply may have been saving money. To Rosemary’s friend Florence, it represented their confidence in her abilities.

Florence’s sister Nannie Holcombe and at least two other black classmates, Naomi Williams and Edith Moten, also practice taught at Glenfield prior to their 1918 graduation. (Florence practiced there in 1927 as well. In 1946, the first permanent time

¹⁸¹ Telephone conversation on 11/19/96 with her daughter, Grace Francis.

African American teacher in Montclair was assigned to the same school, which by then was predominantly black.) Naomi's daughter made little of the restrictions on where her mother could practice and teach because it was so taken for granted at that time.¹⁸²

In 1920, Nellie Morrow arrived at the Montclair State Normal School. Her brother, E. Frederick Morrow, wrote that Nellie applied to the school because it "had a good reputation and it was in commuting distance of home." She encountered objections and obstacles, "not from the college, but from the high school and local do-gooders." Those local people thought Nellie would obtain neither a practice teaching assignment nor a permanent placement, "unless she could be content with a position in the segregated schools of south Jersey." In fact, he said, the other black students at Montclair did plan to teach in the southern area of the state or out of state.

Nellie was successful in her studies, but had trouble locating a practice teaching site, as predicted. Whether or not she tried to find placement in the town of Montclair, as did several other black students, is unknown. Her hometown superintendent finally "consented to let her try practice teaching" in a Hackensack elementary school where "no Negroes attended." Presumably, he "could discharge a moral obligation to a local citizen and taxpayer, but be blameless for the failure of the applicant." Despite the withdrawal of some pupils by their protesting parents, Nellie did well.

Her next challenge was to find a permanent position upon graduation in 1922. At a meeting of the Hackensack board of education, one of the only voices speaking in favor of Nellie's appointment was her father's. Even the local black delegation, convinced by their white employers that a black teacher of their children would be inferior, said: "We feel our children would not respond or learn under a Negro teacher, and that her presence

¹⁸² Telephone conversation on 1/23/00 with her daughter, Louise Baxter Fields.

would only add to the many problems that already exist in the system.” Nevertheless, the superintendent finally offered Nellie a contract. “I know this will cause a storm in this town, but so be it.” Morrow reported that his sister’s teaching career would “test her very soul almost beyond the bounds of human endurance. . . . The hate-mail addressed to our house was voluminous.” The Ku Klux Klan “paraded and harangued and threatened. They even invaded Hackensack with a fiery night-parade, and they let us know by deed and letter that our lives and home were in jeopardy.” But the family survived and thrived (Morrow 87-95).

The 1920s brought racially hostile episodes for other young black women who were high school students at the time and would enter the college within a few years. One had difficulty making friends because of her mixed race, another endured her physician father’s humiliation in being barred from caring for his patients at the local hospitals, and others experienced difficulties inside those same hospitals. That type of open societal racism continued—though in weakening forms—throughout the college lives of all subjects.

On the campus itself, the most noticeable form of explicit institutional racism—the lack of black students—was absent. The numbers were small, but African Americans were there from the beginning. Yearbooks and word of mouth confirm at least 11 black graduates during the normal school decade of the 1920s—and the four missing yearbooks probably would reveal several more. By comparison, there were only six in total during the much larger college enrollment of the 1930s—and no yearbooks are missing.

The Depression may account in part for the severe reduction in numbers in two ways. One is that black families, who were economically poorer already, could not afford the modest tuition and/or travel expenses of a college education. Second, white families whose children normally would have enrolled elsewhere were forced by

financial straits to make do with the local teachers college, thus taking places that might have been held by black students in the 1920s.

But another explanation is that systemic racism in the larger society prevented African Americans from either seeking or obtaining admittance to a college that was preparing high school teachers rather than elementary school teachers, as did the normal school. Teachers for the early grades could be absorbed in New Jersey's segregated southern elementary schools, but black high school teachers were a long way from general acceptance anywhere in the state. Additionally, societal racism limited opportunities for African Americans to the point that they often were underprepared both educationally and economically to take advantage of higher education, even if the schools had been clamoring for black teachers.

Although institutional racism cannot be proven, the sparse presence of black students of either gender clearly resulted from systemic societal racism. (The first two African American males did not graduate until 1940.) But the existence of a college or state quota system *per se* has not been established. In fact, the person who directed the admissions process during the 1950s adamantly denied that such a quota existed, either officially or unofficially.

Patricia Turner researched the function of rumors in African American culture and compared them to scabs that form over a sore. They serve as "an unattractive but vital mechanism by which the cultural body attempts to protect itself from subsequent infections" (220). The existence of a quota system was a persistent rumor circulating among black students at Montclair. They were anxious about their own chances for admission under the assumption that a limited number of African Americans would be accepted. At the same time, rejection could be explained in terms of the quota—protection from the hurt of *personal* rejection. Turner pointed out that rumors can be

controlled or quelled if authorities “send clear, unconditional signals that communicate a genuine desire and commitment to eliminating racial intolerance and inequality once and for all” (219). If this is so, then the Montclair authorities failed. The rumors continued throughout the three decades covered by this study.

The source of the low black enrollment was likely outside the college’s control, but MSTC did take a tiny step toward official institutional racial progress by offering residence to one African American student in the early 1930s. Granted, Katherine looked Caucasian. Granted again, the offer was accompanied by an act that Katherine later perceived as racist when the dean of women summoned all the dormitory dwellers to inform them of her arrival. Granted yet again, the same dean of women had advised Katherine’s father to keep her away from the men to avoid “a problem on the campus.” Still, the institution made a (positive) overture, even though an individual administrator followed the (negative) dictates of society in its implementation.

Another example of societal racism, as perceived by four African American subjects, was the fact that they did not get scholarships. However, seven black participants did receive scholarships and others are known to have acquired them as well. The perception was different from the reality, although it is possible and even likely that certain local scholarships indeed were bestowed along racial lines. State scholarships were awarded to both black and white students.

Unlike Nellie Morrow in 1922, most of the black participants in this study did not have trouble locating practice teaching assignments and did not feel steered toward or away from particular schools. There were exceptions, as noted in the previous chapter. The vast majority worked with white cooperating teachers and either white or mixed pupil populations, and some subjects asserted that the race of the children was almost unnoticed and certainly irrelevant. “At the time it didn’t make a difference” (Gerry).

Only four people had some of their practice in all-black schools. In general, the cooperating teachers gave the young prospective teachers encouragement and freedom in the classroom. Devore noted that in the northern institutions (such as Newark and Montclair), “the northern policy of integration . . . provided exposure to the classroom with the support of a helping teacher and for Black students the possibility of teaching in both integrated and segregated schools” (227).

However, practicing was not the same as working. Racism was undeniably a systemic problem in the matter of obtaining a teaching position. When I observed to Alma that, at least in northern New Jersey, the schools presumably would have been integrated when she was seeking a job in 1940, she replied: “‘Presumably’ and perhaps on paper, but there was residential segregation which created the school segregation, and in parts of the state there was deliberate physical segregation.” In 1932, the assistant dean of New York University’s School of Education had confirmed: “The situation in New Jersey is by no means typical, and represents in general the method of bringing about segregation artificially in cases where natural means do not turn the trick” (Interracial Committee 39). In one sense, school segregation opened job opportunities for African Americans in the black elementary schools of New Jersey. Some of them even were able to remain in the northern part of the state, which still had a number of virtually all-black elementary schools.

But most graduates of Montclair State Teachers College sought secondary positions, and those schools were integrated. There was a sense among several participants that black teachers would not be hired in particular school districts and indeed it often took them longer to find employment. The particular trials of locating jobs have been described before. Although most subjects eventually found positions in integrated New Jersey schools, some entered through a side door by filling in midyear on

an emergency basis. Some waited a long time for openings within the state and others had to “go South.” The small number of interviewees makes the calculation of percentages a shaky business, but 75% of the white subjects versus 48% of the African Americans received and accepted an offer to begin teaching the semester after graduation.

Returning to the notion that racism is in the eye of the beholder, some subjects were unwilling to classify their unfruitful job searches as racist even though they were continually disappointed: “Nobody ever said anything unpleasant to me or anything like that, but I just couldn’t get a job” (George). As noted by Myrdal, the widening of educational opportunities often made the continued employment barriers deeply discouraging. Those barriers, erected by institutional racism, became like hurdles on an obstacle course over which most subjects finally jumped, with perhaps a few bruises but hope still intact: “It’s something that you meet so often when discrimination runs rampant. . . . It’s not a total surprise, but sometimes you think maybe things will be different” (Alma).

It was shown in the previous chapter that 19 of the 24 black participants and each of the four whites in this study maintained they had neither experienced nor seen what they would classify as unequivocal racism at Montclair. In fact, the only African American in the class of 1935 declined to be formally interviewed with the explanation that she had nothing to contribute precisely because there were no racial problems on campus at that time.¹⁸³ Some did note off-campus racism and a few mentioned incidents whose interpretation was not quite clear to them. But only in the normal school years did

¹⁸³ Telephone conversation on 8/24/97 with Ruth Earley Dunne.

there seem to be racial restrictions on campus involvement. Referring to membership in social sororities, Florence said they “didn’t ask the black girls for anything like that then.” Even there, it is unlikely that such a directive would have been imposed by official action. Rather, it was taken for granted by the students in accordance with the times.

Alma Bushell, an African American normal school graduate from 1927, wrote a poem that was published in the yearbook and hints at her thoughts about acceptance on campus versus in the world of teaching (*Montclarion* 1927 21).

I wouldn’t mind teaching all alone—
If I could come back to you;
You are so fine, I have you in my mind,
In everything I try to do.
When I look out toward the hill
Where you stand, I feel so lonely,
'Cause Montclair Normal is the school for me,
And it’s her that I love only.

The first line seems to anticipate the solitary stance she would assume as a teacher, “all alone,” contrasted with her feelings of “love” for the normal school that she hoped to rekindle by visits back to the campus.

In the college years of the 1940s and later, black men and women were members and leaders of Greek social organizations as well as academic clubs. In athletics, there was openness from the beginning. The black custodian coached various sports in normal school days, the black students in the normal school were almost all involved in athletics, black men apparently were warmly welcomed in college sports, and the college competed against black schools such as Cheyney without incident. (Racial incidents did occur, however, when a Montclair team went South with its black players and was menaced by stone-throwing local malcontents.)

Interviewees were asked to recall racist incidents on or around the campus, if any. I was aware that the term “racist” would not have been used in those days (and was explicitly reminded of that fact by one subject), but the word is so widely used today that its meaning and the type of information sought were clear to the respondents. The interviewees’ specific comments concerning racism are included in the previous chapter. Here, it is worth noting the recurrence of two phrases.

The first was: “I would have remembered.” Several subjects used the phrase to express the certainty that they were not misleading themselves in glossing over racist incidents. A modification of the phrase was: “If anything ever happened to me, I don’t remember it, which would mean it probably just didn’t happen.” The second phrase was some variation of “so few of us” (used by 12 black subjects) or “so few of them” (used by three of the four white subjects). The phrase was employed in stating a simple fact when asked, for example, how many African American students were on campus. Alma used it to observe, “When there’s so few, you just sort of know each other.” For others, it was a springboard for elucidating, as Vernell said, something “that almost all black people believe.” She continued:

Where there are a few, there’s no problem. . . . How are you going to have a problem? You’ve got Vernell McCarroll over there and she’s . . . going to walk through the courses. She’ll be fine. She’ll never embarrass the college. Tom is marvelous. . . . We weren’t . . . threatening, and there weren’t men around so we didn’t have the competition or—you know, the interracial dating or anything like that. . . . It would have been foolish for anybody to think about insulting . . . four black kids on campus when the world is being ripped apart [by World War II] and nobody knew when he was going to go.

Ethel B picked up the theme:

The only thing I can think of on campus that was racist was there were so few of us there! . . . And what I had heard about Montclair State is that during those days they just did not have a lot of so-called “minority” students. But once we got there, I think because there were so few of us there, that there was no reason to act racially against us because who would pick on less than 15 people out of 200 or 300 or 500 students there? So I think we just got lost in the crowd.

And Howard followed up:

There weren't that many blacks on campus, so the threat level was very low. . . . With the black population, as far as minorities were concerned, we still were at that level where we weren't any kind of threat. . . . We reach a certain point, and I guess that's somewhere about 20 to 30 percent, then it's a whole different thing. . . . We could be tolerated because . . . when you have a small group like that, you tend to establish different kinds of relationships. . . . Different in that they try to get to know the individual.

Finally, Reuben observed: "When the numbers of African Americans increase in certain places, . . . the dominant European society sort of, you know, feels threatened for some reason."

Audrey (white) discerned the same phenomenon: "There weren't enough African American students to be harassed." Elena deMichele Chopek, another white student who was not a formal interviewee but a close friend of Joyce, said: "We never thought in terms of blacks and whites. It may have been because there were so few blacks then" in the time "before their voices were heard."¹⁸⁴ Moe (white) said: "I would guess that they felt a little out of place because there were so few of them."

The conviction that "so few" could not be a problem was mentioned by historian Ralph Bunche, who was credited with having "laid important groundwork for Gunnar Myrdal's monumental *An American Dilemma*" (Sollors 255). When Bunche lived in Detroit from 1904 to 1914, he found "little or no prejudice against Negroes because there were not then enough of us there. The Negro migration from the South came during the First World War." Leaving Detroit, the family went to Albuquerque, New Mexico.

¹⁸⁴ Telephone conversation on 1/13/00.

“There again there was not much prejudice against Negroes, since they were so few in the community” (Sollors 256-257).

The sentiment that more than “a few” minorities become a threat was played out at Harvard when restrictions were placed on both African Americans and Jews. President Lowell “touched off the most publicized college discrimination controversy of the 1920s when he simultaneously barred Negroes from the freshman dormitories and inaugurated a quota system for Jewish students.” Although residence was compulsory for all other freshmen, blacks were banned from the halls. The president explained that it was for the sake of the African Americans themselves: “We owe to the colored man the same opportunities for education that we do to the white man; but we do not owe it to him to force him and the white into social relations that are not, or may not be, mutually congenial.” His explanation for limiting Jewish students was that “anti-Semitic feeling is increasing, and it grows in proportion to the increase in the number of Jews” (Wolters 195). The *New Republic* summarized the argument as follows:

The Harvard flavor can be imparted successfully to men of any race or religion. . . . But it is not to be denied that the flavor is most easily imparted to men of the old New England stock. Others take it effectively only when they are well immersed in social groupings of the original character. They must therefore be present in relatively small numbers. . . . Five Jews to the hundred will necessarily undergo prompt assimilation. Ten Jews to the hundred might assimilate. But twenty or thirty—no. They would form a state within a state. They would cease to take an active part in the general life of the college. . . . What they got out of Harvard might be worth their time and effort, but it would not be the priceless Harvard flavor. Thus it appears that, in the interest of the Jews as well as in the interest of the Gentiles, the number of Jews ought to be kept below the saturation point. Better one true Jewish Harvard man than ten mere Jewish scholars. (Wolters 197)

The black students had even less of a chance than the Jews in that none at all would be permitted the opportunity to imbibe the “Harvard flavor” in the dormitories. The same restrictions were imposed at Radcliffe College. Muriel Snowden, who was the valedictorian of her high school class in a wealthy town adjoining Montclair, graduated

from Radcliffe in 1938 and became the first black woman elected to the Board of Overseers at Harvard in 1977. Despite all her success, she said, “my most vivid memory of Radcliffe is of being denied access to a dormitory my freshman year” (Sollors 298). The overseers ultimately overruled the president by banning discrimination on both racial and religious grounds. Even so, Montclair’s future president, David Dickson—who graduated at the top of his Bowdoin College class in 1941 and went on to Harvard for a doctorate in English literature—wrote:

Even before the start of the fall semester, 1941 I learned that however distinguished academically, Harvard was far from democratic socially. Six years before, my brother Leon, although a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Bowdoin, had been denied entrance to its medical school because Harvard would not or could not provide him the hospital experience, nor would the assistant Graduate Dean Mayo offer me a room in Divinity Hall as requested, or any other dormitory since he already had given a Negro student one of the coveted spaces and to give two would be “unfair” to students of the majority race. (39)

Vernell’s husband, who did live on campus in the 1940s, felt accepted socially but did not have a positive academic experience at Harvard. He “had many, many stories to tell about not being comfortable on Harvard’s campus, in Harvard’s classes, with what was being said” as professors often were dismissive of the intellectual ability of African Americans.

As noted in Chapter II, Montclair had its own mini-crisis in the dormitory in 1946. Although nothing so blatant as a presidential (or statewide) directive has been discovered, the fact is that black students were not afforded residence on campus for many years. If they did not live within commuting distance, they could lodge at the local YWCA or make their own arrangements. One enterprising African American who enrolled at the normal school in 1916 found a place to live through networking. Ethel Van de Vere’s aunt was a domestic worker in Montclair and obtained a “house job” for her niece in the home of a normal school professor. Ethel learned to cook German food

and received room and board in exchange for housework and meal preparation. As a graduation gift in 1919, the professor gave her a dictionary.¹⁸⁵

Before 1946, the single exception seems to have been the very fair daughter of a prominent physician. Katherine lived in a dormitory for one semester in 1933. Thirteen years later, Ophelia Bland unpacked her bags and settled in to a makeshift room when administrators allegedly saw their “mistake” upon her arrival. This particular student could not have had an easy time due to her initial odd accommodations, although the white student with whom she roomed the next semester was a liberal, open person who welcomed her as she would any other roommate.

For unknown reasons, she seems to have stayed for only one year. The experiment was picked up the following fall by Juanita and, subsequently, by a steady streamlet of black women—including Ophelia herself, who returned to the dormitory sometime after her freshman year. The campus apparently was more ready than the country at large to start erasing institutional racism. Yet a racist residue was detected by some of those early residents in that they usually lived in single rooms. Several subjects asserted that they *chose* the single room, while others said it was assigned to them. In either case, they all acknowledged that it was possible to move in with a roommate whenever one chose, although the choice of two participants was to remain in a single room throughout the four years. A curiosity (which might have no meaning) is that both of them remained single all their lives, whereas every black resident who had a roommate married.

Again, the mixture of institutional versus individual racism is apparent. The college administration presumably made official decisions on the admittance and

¹⁸⁵ Telephone conversation on 11/19/96 with her daughter, Grace Francis.

accommodations of African Americans in the dormitories, and their conservatism was a bow to societal racism. But individual racism appears to be absent in that black students could and did move in with white (and sometimes black) roommates after the first semester. Like the president of Harvard, the college would not “force” people into “social relations that are not, or may not be, mutually congenial.” Unlike that eminent president, neither did the college prevent the opportunity for whatever social relations might develop naturally in the halls among students of different races.

Only five black subjects believed they had encountered unquestionable racism on Montclair’s campus, and five others eventually recalled situations that might have been racially tinged. In addition to the dormitory incident involving Katherine mentioned above, there was the denial of undergraduate admission to one prospective student (which she attributed to prejudice) and the telephone call made by a dean to inform a practice teaching school of another student’s ethnicity. Each of these acts was institutional insofar as an official college representative perpetrated it. On the other hand, the act of a single person may not represent the view of the institution as a whole. Moreover, although the student subjected to the practice teaching humiliation was angry, she recalled feeling that the dean believed he was “doing the right thing. He felt that he would have been remiss not to have called them and made this declaration.”

Another incident—the removal of campaign posters featuring a black student—was likely an individual rather than institutional act. Whether it derived from racism or from the unethical campaign tactics of an opponent unrelated to any issue of race is impossible to substantiate without knowing who committed the crime or why it was committed. Nevertheless, combined with the sense of unwelcome she had already detected, the student’s perception was that a racist act had occurred. Two African Americans mentioned dating misfortunes as explicitly racial problems, and many others

lamented the lack of an adequate dating pool on the campus. Although they did not put it in racist terms, white students joined in the lamentation as well, especially when the men were away at war, but the situation was worse for African Americans because their numbers were even fewer.

Another example of perceived individual racism was a musical student's rejection as a member of an elite singing group. The same subject mentioned another situation in the context of classroom acceptance rather than racial incidents, but clearly it was such in her mind. As excerpted in the previous chapter, a social studies professor, Miss Stewart, taught a course titled "Civilization and Citizenship." Her technique was to call on various class members for an opinion on the topic at hand. At the end, she would turn toward Bernice, the only black student, to inquire: "And Miss Mallory, what do you think?" Bernice became aware of the pattern and, in her straightforward style, made an appointment and "stomped in there" to demand an explanation.

I said, "What is this? I grew up and these people are the same general economic group that I came from, and why is mine different? Why is it '*and Miss Mallory?*'" Well, she turned 50 shades of red and she says, "I didn't realize I was doing that." I said, "But maybe you don't, but you are and it's bothering me. I expect to be treated the same as everybody else—no better, no worse. And when I hear '*and Miss Mallory, what do you think?*' Okay, here's my group—that's valid—now let's see what this other one thinks." And I don't feel that she was just being prejudicial. She didn't even have to call—she might not have called on me at all, in which I would have also had— She was always very pleasant and very nice to me, but I think this is something in the back of her head. She did see me— I was different. Maybe my experiences— And I might have had some experiences that were different from some people by virtue of being black.

Miss Stewart was the professor praised by other African American students for her liberalism and castigated by Dr. Wittmer (the communist hunter) for the same reason. Therefore, an alternate explanation for her classroom manner with Bernice is that she genuinely *did* want to know what the student thought, and exactly *because* she was black. Perhaps in her mind, she was taking care not to leave Bernice out. But Bernice already

had a strong sense of identity and simply saw herself as one among equals without the need for special attention.

A few other people questioned their complete acceptance in the classroom by a particular professor. For example, a certain teacher might have been “a little picky on me.” But they were unwilling to categorize these occurrences as definitely racist.

Despite the assertions of most subjects that Montclair State Teachers College was, in fact, a welcoming environment where they did not experience racial problems, except those cited above, a number of people made vague references to circumstances that were ambiguous. Perhaps there was unfair grading in the classroom by some professors; perhaps they simply did not see what was really happening; perhaps someone else could give a concrete example. And, perhaps, they simply made choices not to interpret events in a racist light *at that time*. They had developed personal philosophies for navigating a white world in ways that they would not necessarily choose today. In the culture of the time, it worked for them.

A 1948 Radcliffe College alumna who was the first African American to be elected president and marshal of the senior class “smiled at everyone and everyone smiled at her. If there were any racially motivated barbs flung her way—and surely there must have been—she just didn’t notice” (Sollors 306). Montclair students often chose not to notice either. Examples of their philosophies in dealing with potential racial problems follow in chronological order of the individual’s year of graduation:

I think it’s all in how you look at it. . . . I try to look out—look for the best in everything, and therefore I find it. But when you look for something that isn’t so good, you’re going to find that too. (Florence ’28)

After all, I was an Afro-American and there were limited possibilities. I never felt bitter about it; I knew *it was a fact of life*. (Norma ’33)

You see, *it was a different period*. I grew up in the “one world.” I’m a one-worlder, you know. We grew up in the ’30s. This was going to be a great world.

Integration was the solution to the problem. We talk about multiculturalism now, but it was much more multicultural then, before the war. . . . And I can't think—I think that most of the people at Montclair were like that. I don't think that you'd find a bigoted person. (Vernell '43)

I have learned through the years, and I tell my children this, don't accept other people's problems. Those are their problems. Don't internalize them. Live your own good life. *Forget about them.* (Thelma A '44)

I think maybe at the time, whatever there may have been in the way of a racist attitude or climate, *we just sort of ignored it or accepted it*, because that was the thing, you know. *You walked away from it*, you know. It wasn't until the '60s that people began to really—when Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks, and that kind of thing, where people really began to make waves about any kind of racial attitudes that people would put upon them. . . . *Our student days, no.* (Marilyn '46)

We also went to college at a time when the races were trying to get along together. . . . My college days predated all of that polarization which has since occurred in our society. . . . We were not polarized; we were friends. . . . I would sometimes walk down the street and the kids would—you know, yell epithets and things like that. I don't know. *I think I probably ignored most of it.* . . . We grew up after World War II, a time when people were trying to get along together. That may have had some influence on overt incidents. . . . When you go to . . . a predominantly white college, there's no way you're going to succeed at the school if you're going to go around seeing racism every time you turn around. It just isn't going to work. . . . So I guess because I didn't look for it, I didn't find it. . . . *Go with the flow, I guess.* (Juanita '51)

It wasn't demeaning. It was just something that we knew. . . . In the eyes of Caucasians, many black people look the same. . . . It was something that *could have been a problem, but it wasn't.* (Thelma C '53)

There were a lot of things we did not do. We just didn't do them because *we did not want to expose ourselves* to whatever. . . . You know, it's funny, I can't think of a low point if there was, and I'm sure there must have been some. But I can't recall anything. If there was, *I put it down inside* and I can't put my finger on anybody that I was really angry or upset with. (Bernice '53)

Although I have always known that I was black, it's never been a problem for me—not before I went to Montclair, not while I was at Montclair, not since I left Montclair. . . . *Until the '60s, I just never thought about race.* (Matthew '54)

You know how racism runs. It runs the gamut, and you have interface with some people where you think that in some situations they had an ax to grind, but I just . . . worked on around it, *really didn't pay it too much attention.* (Howard '56)

Maybe it's because I was in so many things that I didn't have problems at Montclair. . . . Certainly [racism] had no impact on me as far as I was concerned—*at that time*. (Joyce '56)

If something exists, something is accepted as being the way it is, and *you go along*. *Sometimes you're not even aware of it*. (Patricia '56)

We just didn't have time to sit around and conjecture things if they weren't there. And as I said, if they were sly and covert—you just didn't major on it. At least I didn't. . . . I don't have to worry what other people are doing or what other people are saying about me. I'm going to go on and focus on what I'm doing. . . . There might have been things going on and maybe because *I didn't pay attention to them* or they weren't something that were right there in front of me. (Ethel B '57)

There wasn't the contentiousness between races, you know, and the *distrust* . . . *not as open as it is now*. (Reuben '59)

I think sometimes people can come into a situation with a chip on their shoulder. I don't think we were, shall we say, intelligent enough to have that chip? We didn't see it. . . . *We might have overlooked a lot of things*. (Jeannette '59)

The italicized areas reveal the pattern of all these comments—*at that time* race was not something to be noticed. When an incident occurred that might hurt if it festered, well then, it was just ignored until it went away.

Racism, of course, is not a black and white issue in any sense of the phrase. Several subjects mentioned explicitly that Italian and Jewish students were more likely than others to be part of their intimate circles of friends. They, too, had suffered exclusion in the larger world. Dartmouth, Columbia, Harvard, Yale, and others imposed quotas on Jewish students. They were blatantly denied access to many elite colleges and universities as late as the 1930s. In addition to the “so few” explanation of Harvard's president cited earlier—or, rather, the problems he believed would be caused by “too many”—the presidents of these institutions righteously (but wrongly) asserted that race was a valid criterion for leadership potential and that Jews were lacking in that capacity. However, the truth was that they usually assimilated so well into undergraduate life, especially in programs and activities that emphasized scholarship, that their presence was

threatening to traditional students. Public pressure was required to force the colleges “to fulfill the promise of American democratic principles, and not merely to meet the interests of their upper-middle-class WASP constituency alone” (Levine 150, 158). Although no such quota is known to have existed at Montclair, Jewish students were probably more sensitized than others to racial unfairness.

Jews and Italians were counted separately in two township publications during the years of this study. A bulletin on the Montclair Day Nursery for children of families in difficulty noted that in 1937, the 53 children were “largely from families of Italian origin; there were also some Negroes and white Americans.” Ten years later, a report issued under the title “Montclair Civil Rights Audit and Montclair Community Audit” likewise distinguished among Italian, Jewish, and white Americans. The group had conducted an exhaustive study of various aspects of township life, including the restaurant audit led by Ethel M and her band of college students. In another of the investigations that involved education, the Italian and Jewish high school populations were listed separately from the white.

An Italian MSTC student, Gerard Caracciolo '56, believed most of his white classmates came from integrated schools and felt comfortable with black students. He knew most African Americans himself and said that he too experienced subtle discrimination at the college, where faculty seemed to favor blonds with blue eyes. For example, he suspected certain roles in plays were not offered because he looked “too Italian” and, if he was selected, it was for stereotypical Latin roles. Similar to what African Americans recalled, he said such concerns were not discussed with the faculty or

even among the students. It was accepted as a way of life, and each student dealt with it individually.¹⁸⁶

No subjects encountered black-on-black racism at Montclair State Teachers College, but it was experienced by some in their outside lives. Allport (198-199) noted sociologist Ira Reid's finding that American blacks stereotyped West Indian or Caribbean blacks in ways that generated suspicion and division. The West Indian Ethel M was ostracized occasionally in high school, where "there was a certain amount of friction between American blacks and West Indian blacks." Gwen's West Indian father objected to her boyfriends if they were "too black." Vernell likewise observed that one of her friends (a student at MSTC) may have had a disadvantage because "her family was primarily Caribbean, and I say disadvantage because blacks and Caribbeans have contentions—you know, the way, let's say, Dominicans and Puerto Ricans have. . . . So she wasn't really quite able to get into some of the circles." More commonly, darker interviewees sometimes experienced discrimination when their lighter-hued high school friends were favored. "At home," said Joyce, "we could discriminate among ourselves just as much as we were being discriminated against by white people."

However, discrimination by whites was far more prevalent. The historian Ralph Bunche wrote about attending a movie theater in New Mexico with his mother when he was a boy. They took seats in an area reserved for whites and were misidentified as Mexicans—who, in that place at that time, were the minorities targeted for discrimination because of their multitude.

Very soon the usher came and tapped my mother on the shoulder and told her that he was very sorry but it was the rule of the house that Mexicans sit in the last row. My mother looked at him, and, in a most friendly way, thanked him for his

¹⁸⁶ Telephone conversation on 1/12/98.

kind consideration and said that the seats were quite comfortable and that she preferred to remain in them. We did remain in them, and that made quite an impression upon me as a youth. (Sollors 257)

George relayed a similar principle-establishing situation involving going to the movies as a child (see Chapter V). His parents taught their three children to resist segregation by taking the whole family to the theater, deliberately sitting in the forbidden area, and daring the management to move them. (They were not moved.) George learned that “whether they wanted me or not, I belonged there, that’s all.” It was a principle that would be tested for him and others into the 1960s as segregation practices governed the access of African Americans to many movie theaters, restaurants, swimming pools, and other public accommodations in New Jersey (G. Wright 14).

Certainly, not all whites were prejudiced and many were involved with African Americans in the fight for equality. Even those who were not fighting were often sympathetic or simply unaware. Marie (white) said, “I have never recalled discussing it from the point of view of black and white in the old days.” Audrey (white) declared, “You didn’t even think about” race. The African Americans themselves tried not to think in such terms, as shown by the comments earlier in this section. At the end of the twentieth century, Montclair State University’s second black president, Irvin Reid, echoed the feeling:

Racism will always exist. . . . I don’t think it is constructive to sit around endlessly analyzing and identifying the existence of racism. . . . Our next challenge is to achieve some good for those who are victims of racism and those who are perpetrators of it. To the extent that you can benefit both, the society is a better place.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁷ Interview on 5/27/97.

Judging by the statements of most black participants in this study, the MSTC campus was welcoming at its best and neutral at its worst. Students of both races were cognizant of the principle that “so few” African Americans are not generally a racial target for the majority. Even so, some subjects did acknowledge the presence of both individual and institutional racism, however subtle it may have been—and in both directions. As Thelma A admitted: “I have my prejudices, too. Don’t we all?”

Status Attainment

For the purpose of this study, status is defined as one’s position relative to others in the hierarchy of prestige. The democratic principles upon which the United States of America was founded created for all its inhabitants a door of opportunity to higher status. For some people, the door stood wide open, inviting easy entrance. For others, the door was hidden and significant energy was invested in locating it. For African Americans, the door was not necessarily out of view, but often out of reach. The usual path of access through education was barred to many blacks. Without the requisite learning, they were unable to secure positions of prestige or power or prosperity.

The inequality of opportunity created a somewhat different system of professional values within the African American community, as described in previous chapters. Teaching was accorded more respect than it generally attained in the white world because blacks could reach the top of the profession within segregated school systems—an advantage often denied other professionals such as doctors and lawyers. Also, preparation for teaching was relatively inexpensive, courtesy of the states that were obliged to staff their schools.

The high status of careers in education even at the turn into the twenty-first century is confirmed by the large percentage of African American graduates who obtain

degrees in education and related disciplines (such as counseling and reading) at all levels.

Astin discovered not only that education is a popular choice for black undergraduate students, but also that “their representation among advanced-degree recipients is not too much lower than their representation in the population at large” (1982 60).

In their home communities, some subjects had the full support of the family and neighbors, for whom the student may have represented the embodiment of dreams that would continue unfulfilled in their own lives. Ethel B spoke of her travel companions on the ride to Montclair:

On the bus as I went up to the college, most of those people on the buses were domestic workers and they were so proud that I was going to school that they would look out for me. You know, at my stop, “Honey, you have to get off here; honey, don’t miss your stop!” So they were protective of me and I guess they went home and they told some of them, this little black girl, you know, Negro girl, she’s going up to Montclair State College. And the bus drivers and everyone, you know, they would make sure that I got off at my right stop and I got up the hill all right.

Ethel B’s achievements would lend some elevated status to her neighbors because one of their own “made it.”

Bowen asserted that the success of students is based not only on their own educational achievement but also on that attained by their ancestors (199). Juanita’s experience validated his position. Several of her close ancestors—uncle, aunts, three grandparents, great uncle—had completed college and obtained professional positions in medicine and education. Although her own parents did not go to college, she went on to earn a doctoral degree. “All that back here in the background,” she mused, “I guess that has a lot to do with what happens later on.” The higher status of Juanita’s relatives provided a goal, an opening, an expectation that she could do likewise.

But higher status of one’s forbears or oneself sometimes caused envy rather than the happy pride displayed by Ethel B’s neighbors or the expectation in Juanita’s family.

Joyce went to an Alpha Kappa Alpha meeting at the home of a member and was confronted with a startling new reality in

the house of a black girl whose father was a doctor—in Newark, I think it was—and there were marble tiles on the floor. And that was the first time I was ever faced with any kind of affluence in a black family and it was a shock to me, really. It was really culture shock. . . . I resented it. I said, “Why can’t we have all this?” It was terrible.

Her comment contrasted sharply with one made by Frances, another doctor’s daughter, who said:

I fit in [with wealthy classmates]. . . . When I walked into their homes I wasn’t awed by what I was seeing because my parents’ friends lived on the same level. . . . The only thing different about me was my skin color, that basically I was just like them, only black.

Frances became so isolated by her higher status, with its accompanying economic privileges, that her life was lonely. She suspected other black children “may have steered clear because they felt like I was—not better than them, but in a different class.”

Being the daughter of a professional, I was kind of isolated because some of the other minority black kids . . . I had advantages that they didn’t have. . . . Their parents were working either as manual laborers or they were working as household help or, you know, very service-oriented jobs. . . . I grew up very isolated.

She had trouble finding friends of a rank that suited her father’s patients, who evidently believed she was obliged to uphold the status of one black family as a symbol for all.

As a peer group, I was kind of by myself. . . . I had one friend whose mother was a teacher and she lived, oh, a couple of miles away from me, so it wasn’t convenient. . . . There were two young sisters—black girls—that I played with . . . and my dad’s patients were funny. . . . They didn’t think I should play with them because their father—their mother worked in service and the father was a mechanic, auto mechanic, and they felt that I shouldn’t play with them because they weren’t my level. . . . But that was ridiculous. I had to play with somebody. And they were nice girls. We still keep in touch. . . . So I led a very isolated kind of life, so that books were my companions more so than people.

More than one interviewee suffered from status-seekers within the black community. High school brought hurt to girls who were left out because they were too

light or too dark. As noted in the section dealing with racism, Ethel M felt hostility from some dark students due to her West Indian lightness. Joyce and Ethel B felt overlooked by administrators who always chose the fair-skinned children. “We all tried out for cheerleading,” said Joyce, but another girl “was tall and she was fair and she got into cheerleading” while Joyce and her darker friends were not selected. Ethel B echoed this experience in discussing a classmate who was “very, very fair, and whatever I went out to do, she went out to do. So she always got it and I didn’t, and that hurt a lot.” In each case, the students with lighter complexions were accorded higher status, resulting in resentment toward the favored ones. The color-line status continued onto the college level in black institutions, according to what the subjects heard from their friends.

There were other status indicators as well. Frances did not want to go to a black college where “the emphasis was very social—you know, the parties and the clothes and that kind of thing. And I didn’t really feel I would fit in there.” It was noted in the previous chapter that clothes were very important to some subjects, if not to Frances. In *Race Rebels*, Robin Kelley wrote that in the Jim Crow South,

where clothes constituted signifiers of identity and status, “dressing up” was a way of shedding the degradation of work and collapsing status distinctions between themselves and their oppressors. . . . Seeing oneself and others “dressed up” was enormously important in terms of constructing a collective identity based on something other than wage work, presenting a public challenge to the dominant stereotypes of the black body, and reinforcing a sense of dignity that was perpetually being assaulted. Many poor black parents dressed their children in a manner that camouflaged class differences. . . . In his book, *The Georgia Negro: A History* (1937), Asa Gordon admonished the state’s black working-class population for spending more on clothes “than circumstances demanded and income suggested.” African Americans “insist on wearing clothes, that, for them, represent extravagant luxury. Negroes with small incomes insist on wearing the best clothes ‘money can buy.’” (50)

Frances, already in the top status tier, rejected black colleges in favor of Mount Holyoke because

the emphasis always was, you know, that if you really wanted to be a success, you had to go to a white school. . . . If you could say you graduated from Mount Holyoke or Harvard or Amherst or Smith, you know, you were much more readily acceptable and employable.

But she felt isolated and unhappy there. If darker students were in a lower status in black colleges, any African American was in a lower status than any Caucasian in some traditionally white institutions.

Katherine quite innocently raised another status issue, this one related to gender. She mentioned that in high school, she was satisfied to place third among contestants from the city's seven high schools in an oratorical contest sponsored by the *New York Times* because the top two winners were boys. Her comment implies a deference to the status of males—or perhaps simply a justified pride in her accomplishment during a time when females were not expected to excel academically. Interestingly, both Katherine and her younger sister attended colleges that catered to women. The teachers college had a largely female enrollment at that time (1929) and the sister attended a Catholic women's college where she prepared to become a social worker.

At Montclair State Teachers College, the African American students appeared to enjoy the same respect as did white students. The college was extremely attractive to students of both races because of its reputation as “the best,” its high academic standards, and its rigorous competition for admission. All applicants faced the same screening process, thus ensuring that African Americans were as qualified (by prior education and natural ability) to succeed as their white counterparts. Even at present, as revealed through a recent study by the American Council on Education,¹⁸⁸ aspiring high school teachers have academic records comparable to college students as a whole. (Aspiring

¹⁸⁸ *To Touch the Future*, American Council on Education 8.

elementary teachers score lower on standardized aptitude tests.) In the academic life of MSTC, all students were on equal footing and enjoyed the same status.¹⁸⁹

Why should Montclair have been different from Howard or Mount Holyoke?

Surely the standards of those schools were at least as high as Montclair's. But there was an equalizing factor at the teachers college. For the most part, as Audrey said:

We were here because of the finances. . . . And we were here really because we could be here. . . . We had all been accustomed to being, you know, near the top of our classes. So that I think that made it more of a commonality than anything that would have separated us because of the skin color.

And they were all preparing for the same profession. There was no mystery regarding future career status, which contributed to an open understanding during college as well.

The residence experience at Montclair brought blacks and whites together in a more intimate setting beginning in the late 1940s. Living as a family with people from other backgrounds can foster either cohesiveness or bitterness, depending on the openness and good will exhibited by both parties. At Montclair, the togetherness worked in a positive way. Black and white students roomed together, knew each other's habits and families, and saw one another as individuals.

Jencks and Riesman (182) theorized that such residential experiences improved the opportunity for black students of lower social class to observe closely the ways of higher status whites, whose families already occupied top posts. Such observation was supposed to position them to know the proper behavior for high status circles, easing their way into top jobs themselves. At a teachers college, such a consideration probably had little relevance because the graduates were headed into the same societal class to

¹⁸⁹ Earl Davis was in charge of admissions in the 1950s and 1960s, among other responsibilities. He was adamant that all applicants were treated exactly alike. See his statement in Chapter II with regard to quotas.

which all teachers belonged. Not many were aspiring to corporate leadership and its ensuing high society.

Bernice, however, made a related observation with regard to imitation of those who are higher or further along than oneself. As a teacher, she sometimes heard people excuse the poor performance of black children based on their race and, presumably, lesser opportunities. Then she would say:

“Listen. Jewish kids succeed because their parents are telling them from the day they come out of the womb that this is what you’re going to do and that you can do it.” . . . School is very important to them and they make that very clear to them. And if black kids have the same . . . they could do the same thing. . . . There has to be some ability, of course, and some other things. But it’s not about what color you are. It’s not about even where you come from. It’s what you believe. It’s your belief system.

George raised a final point on the status of black teachers by commenting on the attitudes of high school pupils when he began teaching. As presented in the previous chapter, he found that African Americans “didn’t react any different to me than they did to anybody else, except that they had not learned to have respect for black people who were in positions of authority. I had no problem with my white students.” His experience is reminiscent of Nellie Morrow’s more than a quarter of a century earlier, when a black contingent informed the local board of education that a white teacher would be preferable to an African American. A black university student interviewed by Studs Terkel for his 1992 book, *Race*, addressed the apparent disrespect shown by many African Americans toward one another. Whites “feel we’re nothing, we’re not intellectual, we’re barbaric. . . . We’ve been degraded so much that we have imbedded in our minds that maybe we’re not that good. . . . It’s conditioning” (Terkel 205-206).

There is an ironic incongruity between the generally high status bestowed upon teachers in the black community and the simultaneous disregard directed toward some of them. George’s and Nellie’s experiences do seem to validate the desirability of early and

frequent exposure of all pupils to African American teachers to facilitate their respect for everyone who serves in the profession. William Hastie, the first black federal judge in the United States, made the following observation that is applicable to the teachers college classroom:

If blacks need to learn to be effective and at ease and able to communicate with whites in peer groups, a reciprocal need exists among whites. The opportunity to know blacks, to work with them and to gain respect for them as teachers and as fellow students is an important part of the white student's education. And at the same time many white students will acquire new interest in and understanding of the outlook and the problems of their black classmates. (Sollors 268)

Community

As described in Chapter III, community—a feeling of belonging to a cohesive family-like group—is important for the success of any college student. Ideally, the individual belongs to both academic and social communities, meaning the college as a whole plus the social life of the institution. The social often is “nested” within the academic as classroom connections lead to personal connections. An adequate substitute is membership in subcommunities of both types, such as one's fellow majors and at least one social organization. Membership in just one of the two types of groups might also be sufficient, depending on the strength of the attachment. No membership at all, due to incongruence or isolation, positions the student for dropout or transfer. Exceptions may be found among students who have strong community affiliations off campus with family, neighborhood friends, church, or local organizations.

Attinasi (268-270) noted the importance of “cognitive maps” in assisting new students to navigate the unfamiliar campus worlds (both literally and figuratively). The maps generally are developed through informal contacts with seasoned students or, perhaps, through stumbling across the territory with other novices. At Montclair State

Teachers College during the period under study, the physical challenge of the campus was minimal because everything was contained in College Hall except the high school. It was probably similar in size to many of the high schools that subjects had attended, which provided a familiarity that students in contemporary colleges and universities cannot hope to find. Therefore, help in maneuvering through the building was less meaningful than help in understanding the behavioral and social traditions and expectations.

At MSTC, a deliberate attempt was made to create such maps for new students through a Big Brother/Big Sister program. The responsibility of juniors was to orient freshmen to college customs, to introduce them to faculty members and older students, and “above all, to abolish that strangeness each one inevitably feels” (*Pelican* 9/29/32). The only subject who mentioned a big sister was Thelma A, whose newfound sibling rejected her rather than welcoming her into the community. Her excuse was that she already knew and disliked someone named Thelma. “Well, anyway, I met her and she didn’t like me.” Perhaps other new students fared better and thus had no story to report, or perhaps they were neutral with regard to the benefit of the program.

There was a similar system in the residence halls, where a freshman was assigned to a sophomore big sister and served as her “it” for a designated time. Freshman Lillian was happy to be sophomore Patricia’s “it,” an arrangement that brought her immediately into the dormitory circle. Bernice did not mention her big sister in the dormitory, but because she and her friend Connie Williams arrived together, they could share the strangeness of the new environment.

How did the others draw their cognitive maps? Tinto (1982 161) noted that “like-person role models who have successfully navigated the waters of majority institutions” are especially important for minorities. George had talked to Vernell, a

member of his church who was a few years his elder. Patricia followed in the footsteps of her friend Gwen. Three of Ethel M's four brothers had been to college already. Jeannette's sister was a student at another college nearby. Florence's sister was one of the earliest black graduates of the Montclair State Normal School. Lillian's older brother was a senior when she began her studies at Montclair. Each of them had the advantage of the "like-person role model" who had been successful in navigating white waters. Others had to rely on the "stumble-through-with-friends" method.

The participants in this study were unanimous in their general feeling of comfort and acceptance in the classroom, with the few questionable incidents described in Chapter V not affecting negatively their overall assessment. They also were a part of the smaller academic community composed of majors in their discipline, and participated fully in class discussions.

On the social side, interviewees who chose to join formal extracurricular groups could and did. (The informal social activities will be addressed in the next section, "Integration.") The exceptions were invitational honorary and Greek societies. No one had the option of joining an ethnic subgroup as none existed until the late 1950s. But the student newspaper writers were fully aware of a major problem in developing community based on extracurricular activities—a problem that has been addressed by innumerable distinguished scholars since the student editorial appeared in 1931 under the title "The Problem of Commuters."

In the modern sense of the word, education includes a broad field of activity. A college, as a school for education must therefore afford its students more than classroom instruction. It should include social contacts as well. In view of these facts the commuters of any student body present a problem. This is particularly the case in Montclair where approximately sixty percent of our students commute. Students living on or near the campus enjoy opportunities rarely open to commuters. Around "dorm girls," therefore, has been woven a glamour of college life of which the commuter feels himself no part. We have clubs that are open to all students but the press of time and home duties is rarely overcome by

programs offered at meetings. Can these students who are in the majority of our student body be overlooked in the planning of interests to be offered? (*Pelican* 4/24/31)

The problem was the same for commuters of both races, but exacerbated for African Americans by the fact that they had no opportunity to become “dorm girls” at that time. When racial integration began in the late 1940s, residence life became an extremely significant subgroup for many black students. Living together—sharing facilities and meals, jokes and tears, clothes and funds, family and friends—resulted in a cohesive community that was out of the reach of commuters.

The first dormitory at Montclair was situated opposite the classroom building. The second dormitory was placed between those two buildings at a right angle, making the third side of a potential quadrangle. This placement was a deliberate design to promote community, and indeed a third residence hall ultimately completed the quadrangle (in the years following the period of this study). A new cohesiveness seemed to stem from residence life as the women’s dormitories engaged in friendly competition.

By 1940, men were sharing one of the women’s residence halls. When male veterans swelled enrollment throughout the decade, temporary and then permanent quarters for men were constructed—as far as possible from the women’s facilities in accordance with the propriety of the time. The men too developed a subcommunity at their end of the campus. A very important change for black students occurred when they were permitted to live in the halls, thus giving them automatic membership in a vital college community. (The membership would not have been automatic on every campus, as Frances’s unhappy experience at Mount Holyoke shows.)

At Montclair, the black students who lived in the residence halls entered the heart of the social community. Gerry, a commuter who felt very much outside any formal circle other than the classroom, remarked: “I later found out that the minority students

who stayed on campus felt more accepted than I did.” Indeed, the residents themselves expressed that sentiment repeatedly. Gwen, who only had one semester on campus, considered her residence “the best part of the whole thing, and that’s where I really met some more of the black students, because a few of them lived on campus.” George commuted, but was extremely involved in campus activities and often stayed overnight with friends in the residence hall where “there was no problem—never, ever.” A white student, Elena deMichele Chopek, believed there was full acceptance in the dormitory, where she was a good friend of Joyce. Reminiscent of a comment made by Moe, she said: “I wasn’t walking around in their skin, but I thought they were accepted.”¹⁹⁰

The *Pelican* editorial excerpted above continued: “In the formation of a club for commuters, we feel that a step is being taken in the direction of a solution for this problem. We feel that the readiness shown in organization is proof that adjustment is necessary and not far off.” In fact, a Commuters Club was established and at least one interviewee, Gerry, was a member. Unfortunately, the club’s meeting schedule or her travel schedule or both prevented her participation to any appreciable extent, thus defeating the point of the group in her case.

Off-campus communities filled the gap for several subjects. These included family attachments, intense church involvement, NAACP youth groups, the local country club, continued relationships with high school friends, and Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. Kelley observed:

Hidden in homes, dance halls, and churches, embedded in expressive cultures, is where much of what is choked back at work or in white-dominated public space can find expression. “Congregation” enables black communities to construct and enact a sense of solidarity; to fight with each other; to maintain and struggle over a collective memory of oppression and pleasure, degradation and dignity. (51)

¹⁹⁰ Telephone conversation on 1/13/00.

None of the black subjects mentioned an employment site as a community, although the majority of participants did have to work part time. The most frequently cited off-campus group was Alpha Kappa Alpha, and it served as a genuine community for many African American women. Some AKA members were simultaneously highly involved in on-campus organizations, and others hardly at all. Spitzberg and Thorndike found that black students in the 1990s often felt pressured by their peers to join such ethnic subgroups, and others felt forced into them by lack of welcome in the larger society (48). Matthew recounted his son's experience at a New Jersey community college. "Right away he was invited into the black organization. I'm not sure that that is the way to go. I almost believe that what we should be having is less separation and more integration—true integration." At Montclair, Ethel M felt gently pressured not by peers but by her godmother, and her membership in AKA was short-lived. Gerry, on the other hand, felt quite unwelcome in the larger society and perhaps salvaged her college career by finding a community in AKA.

Spitzberg and Thorndike also noticed that minority students of the 1990s tended to be more isolated on their campuses than whites, and that off-campus communities were especially important in preserving a feeling of community belonging. In addition, they raised the possibility of nonacceptance in *both* on- and off-campus groups as students became different from the people at home by virtue of their education and simultaneously not quite enough like the campus majority. The subjects in this study did not appear to experience the phenomenon described by Spitzberg and Thorndike. On the contrary, their support from both camps was generally high although, as usual, there were exceptions.

Gerry's family had not been enthusiastic about her college attendance and neither did she feel wholly accepted in the college life. AKA was unquestionably her community. Bernice had mixed messages from home, with one parent pushing her forward and the other pulling her back. As relayed in Chapter V, she listened to her father rather than her mother and proceeded on to college, where she became very much a part of all campus communities. (Ironically, her sister—who listened to their mother and went to work instead of college—contributed regularly to Bernice's coffers and facilitated her worry-free financial status.)

Joyce was extraordinarily involved in campus activities and retained her home ties as well—seemingly an integral part of both communities. Yet she said sadly: “What I did in college actually was get very fat.” In later years, she “spent thousands of dollars trying to lose weight.” She realized that the problem had started long before she arrived in Montclair. She was teased as an adolescent about being buxom and “put on weight even before college in order to cover it up.” But food also may have been a substitute for a true feeling of belonging. She speculated: “I’m curious about whether I went home [on weekends] because I wasn’t fitting in, you know?”

At home, the church was her focus, as it was for many African Americans. “Perhaps the most powerful institution in the Negro’s world was the church. Barred as they were from many areas of social and political life, blacks turned more and more to the church for self-expression, recognition, and leadership” (J. Franklin 377). Juanita and Jeannette, who lived on campus, sought out church affiliations and involved themselves deeply. Jeannette was grateful especially for the cultural opportunities available in a particular Montclair church. “The church served as the focal point for almost all activity and, to what extent it could or understood, furnished cultural and intellectual stimuli” (Morrow 43). As Matthew put it, “In those days we were all church people.”

The only subjects who conveyed the sense that their higher education distanced them from any of their former associates were women whose high school boyfriends could not handle their new status.

Five participants offered their philosophies for satisfactory integration into the community. Florence likened her involvement to attending a party, where the host expects her to contribute toward a good time and not to complain about the food or the guests. She resolved to put herself wholly into the normal school group, focusing on seeing the best and doing her best. George decided from the beginning to become immersed in as much as possible, making himself a valued member of the college community.

Thelma C, Alma, and Matthew took a different approach to community integration. They concluded that keeping one's expectations low would enable them to enjoy what could be enjoyed and not feel bitter over the rest. Thelma C was satisfied with her relationships on campus. "If you had classes with them, they spoke. I don't think you could ask for anything more!" Alma said "it was so expected and so common that it wasn't worth remarking, that you weren't a part of someone else's social life." And Matthew had no expectation of making lasting friendships because "they were there and I was at this end of the state." There was little chance for disappointment if hopes were low. Basic membership in a community, to whatever extent it was available, was deemed enough.

In the college's early years, a "dean's list" was published to warn students who were in precarious academic circumstances—hardly a community one would aspire to join.

The dean's list at present places emphasis on the undesirable side of scholastic standing at MSTC. In most colleges, a dean's list is something to be aimed for. We feel that we too should have the kind of dean's list that we should like to see

advertised and published. . . . It could very well supplement the present list.
(*Montclarion* 10/24/41)

Five years later, the infamous list was still in effect, and the *Montclarion* (12/17/46) printed an article titled “Dean’s List Shows Dorm Benefits.” A survey in the fall of 1946 by Miss Sherwin, dean of women, revealed that residents constituted 22.7% of the student population but only 16.7% of those on the notorious dean’s list (18 of 108 students). These statistics bore out the conviction of the earlier student newspaper writers as well as Tinto, Astin, and other current researchers. There is a strong connection between involvement (or integration) in a campus community and academic success. The concept of integration is examined in the next section.

Integration

The term integration is used here to define a student’s feeling of connection with both the academic (intellectual) and social (personal) campus communities, as described in the previous section. This concept of integration into two systems was central to the ideas on student persistence and retention developed by Tinto and used by Nettles and others. Both the academic and social sectors were divided into formal and informal subsystems. Lack of integration was attributed either to incongruence with the academic values and culture of a college or to isolation from its social life.

On the academic side, as noted with regard to community (above), all interviewees were completely engaged in the formal classroom. Their admittance to the college validated their intellectual abilities and they were full participants in regular class activities. In the years following the period under study, however, the situation began to change. Educationally disadvantaged black students with potential were admitted minus the benefit of full preparation enjoyed by earlier black students. As noted in Chapter IV,

“Method,” the current superintendent of the Newark Public Schools began her studies at Montclair State in 1964 and realized immediately that her preparation provided through inner city schools was inferior to that of most of her classmates. “When you go to an urban school, you are disadvantaged. You just don’t know it. I never knew that I was fairly poor until I went to college” (*Alumni Life* Winter 2000 3).

Tinto’s research confirmed that formal academic integration is related to having appropriate intellectual challenges, interaction among students and between student and professor, and nurturing of selected students. Not surprisingly, given Montclair’s mission to prepare future teachers, the faculty as a group was lauded by its students as superb, outstanding, the best. According to President Partridge and others, professors were hired not only for knowledge of their discipline, but for the ability to communicate it effectively. Most professors seemed to meet the test of intellectual challenge. Interviewees said they made the subject come alive, served as role models for the future teachers through their command of both the subject and the classroom, inspired students to think deeply, maintained high standards along with the confidence that students could meet those expectations, paid special attention to a student’s particular needs, and took the initiative in assisting students to find jobs. With regard to interaction among students and between student and professor, interviewees also agreed that they were full participants in the classroom as much as they chose to be—and sometimes more than they wanted to be.

In the area of nurturing selected students, at least five faculty members demonstrated racial sensitivity or helped black students to understand their own heritage better. Dr. Folsom took note that Bernice was not working up to her potential in social studies and called her in to work on a plan. The professor’s concern could have been exhibited through providing a general opportunity to do extra-credit work, but she

specifically assigned Bernice to research the entrance of the European nations into Africa, thereby enriching her understanding of the history of her race.

Dr. Cohen “tested” Ethel B on her familiarity with civil rights issues and seemed impressed when she spoke knowledgeably about them. It is possible that his questioning was designed for his academic pleasure, as she seemed to believe. But a more likely explanation, in my view, is that the dean ensured she kept informed and developed her pride in the achievements of her people for her own sake. Dr. Bye took mixed student groups to New York and opened their minds to unknown lifestyles, from the impoverished of both races to the wealthy African American household. In Jeannette’s view, Dr. Clayton risked his reputation to support the establishment of a campus chapter of the NAACP. Dr. Link sensed the suspicion of some black students in his class and immediately acknowledged his southern background. He simultaneously recognized their misgiving and reassured them that he was not a racist without their having to raise the issue (which they probably would not have done) or let it simmer under the surface all semester.

Not all assistance was race-related. Patricia remembered Dr. Bohn taking note of her mediocre work and giving her effective advice on fulfilling her academic potential. Tinto (1993 73) discovered that black students might have the skills to succeed academically, but lack the ability to apply those skills in unfamiliar or unfriendly settings. This may have been the case with Bernice, Patricia, and others whose interested and proactive professors helped them to succeed.

Bernice’s two experiences demonstrate “color blindness” versus “color consciousness.” In Miss Stewart’s case, she wanted the teacher to be color blind, fostering her integration into the classroom “the same as everybody else—no better, no worse.” But when Dr. Folsom singled her out due to academic slippage, Bernice

appreciated the teacher's color consciousness in acknowledging her ethnicity by assigning a project designed to enhance her racial and cultural understanding.

Chickering designated this phenomenon his first law of student development: integration and differentiation. Both are required for healthy growth. In the words of one minority student applicable to differentiation: "If you don't feel proud about your culture and try to be somebody you're not, then it creates all kinds of psychological problems" (Murguía 439). The same professor can be instrumental in fostering both kinds of development, and the individual's perception determines the efficacy of the attempt. At least three teachers were suspected of subtle racism by some black subjects and revered by others. In another context, Howard explained differentiation by saying: "We're just not one great monolithic group. . . . Without question there was as much divergence within the black community as there was in the white community."

Integration is probably more important in the formal academic system than in any of the other three—informal academic, formal social, or informal social—because success in the classroom is required for continued registration. Nettles found that interfering physical, emotional, and relational problems have a greater negative effect on the academic integration of white students than of African Americans, as indicated by grades. There are too few white subjects in this study to make definitive comparisons between the races, but at least five black students did experience such potential obstacles and were able to overcome them, as follows.

Roberta became seriously ill during her first semester and had to withdraw; upon returning, she excelled academically and graduated with honors. Marilyn also withdrew during her first semester, not for personal illness but to care for her sick mother. She, too, was able to complete her studies. Reuben, Matthew, and a black student who was not an interviewee married during their college careers—one secretly and two openly.

Although one withdrew for a semester, they all graduated, thus lending support to Nettles' belief in the ability of black students to achieve academically despite obstacles.

In addition, George, Bernice, and Patricia hinted at relational problems with one of their parents, and quite a few people mentioned the societal racism with which they dealt continually. Yet all were able to continue their programs and graduate. It is very likely that their experience in overcoming problems, necessitated by being black in a white world, toughened the African American students to other difficulties and enabled them to persevere.

But not all black students were able to overcome obstacles. Among the eight known African American dropouts, at least four incurred dismissal based on "low scholarship." According to some of the interviewees who knew them, their academic difficulties were rooted in emotional and relational issues. These problems may have been combined with social isolation, leading to unsatisfactory formal academic work and thus to dismissal.

Two other dropouts left to marry. In the 1920s, women were quite amenable to quitting college if the career goal interfered with the marriage goal. Paula Fass cited a survey that revealed New York University women in the 1920s to be twice as willing to marry in college as were their male counterparts, even if this meant abandoning their education¹⁹¹ (81-82). That willingness carried through for decades past the 1920s.

The reasons for the departure of the remaining three African Americans are unknown. A friend of one of the latter knew she was disillusioned by her major professor

¹⁹¹ Neither could some teachers continue their careers after marriage. According to Florence '28, her older sister (a 1918 graduate) "taught only for a year because she became engaged and got married, and you weren't married when you taught in those days. . . . By the time I had been [teaching] seven years, it was all right to get married."

who “didn’t want me here anyway,” but there were probably other reasons as well.

Financial problems may have caused some to leave, although Tinto noted that this reason “very often reflects the end product of decisions regarding departure more than it does their origins” (1987 81).

If social integration is at least minimally satisfactory for the first two years so that isolation is not a problem, academic involvement often takes on increasing importance in a student’s last two years as the career looms large (Tinto 1993 135). Ethel B “realized that I had goofed around for the first two years and I should have done a little better. So I did a little better academically.” As Howard “got into my junior and senior year of college, my grades went way up.” Vernell, Ethel M, and Patricia all “got better” as they went along, too.

On the informal academic side, integration is established through interaction with faculty and staff outside the classroom. Many researchers have highlighted the importance of connecting with both peers and faculty to ensure student success. As early as 1932, the student newspaper editors were cognizant of the advantage in faculty-student interaction. The following editorial was titled “Make the First Move.”

Do we give our professors and instructors the opportunity to become acquainted with us? Much has been said about the distance preserved by the faculty or their lack of interest in the individual student. But is not this lack of friendship, where it does exist, as much our fault as that of the professor? In each class he has at the least thirty or more new faces and personalities with which to become acquainted, while each of us has, in him, but one. It is, of course, a fact that many hesitate to make a deliberate point of becoming individually known to the instructor because they fear the accusation of having some ulterior selfish motive—usually the attainment of an A grade. But if it became the ordinary rather than the extraordinary procedure for the student to try to know his instructors personally, this suspicion would be permanently and decisively allayed. It is rather difficult to start such a procedure, but the faculty are sympathetic, and while they may at first be shocked by a not strictly business visit from a student, they will soon come to realize that we are trying to do our part. That they will be willing to meet us more than half way has been proved by several faculty members who keep office hours expressly with a view to such contacts. (*Pelican* 2/12/32)

Nineteen of the 28 respondents had at least a little, and sometimes a lot, of such interactions. They included chats in the hallways and offices, membership in clubs with active faculty sponsors, and visits to professors' homes. Among the nine who recalled no such interaction, seven were commuters. The need to rush off for the bus or train precluded their spending time in casual conversation with faculty members. Nevertheless, more than half of the 19 subjects who *were* engaged with faculty outside the classroom also were commuters. Such interaction seems to have been encouraged and valued by the administration. The president's annual reports listed the various "social affairs held at the homes of the college faculty."

Interviewees named the following personal characteristics they appreciated in their professors in addition to academic proficiency. They were dynamic and had a sense of humor; taught young people rather than the subject; looked a student in the eye and recognized him or her as a person; took time to know students personally; were friendly and invited students to their homes. The latter invitations were especially warmly remembered. The student newspaper confirms many such opportunities, as the following excerpts demonstrate.

Dr. Rufus D. Reed, chemistry professor, entertained the Science Club at his home on Monday evening, March 30. About fifty students attended Dr. Reed's annual spring social. (*Pelican* 4/24/31)

A well beaten path is being worn between MSTC and 584 Highland Avenue, since Professor and Mrs. Roy W. Hatch have announced themselves at home daily to members of the social studies department. The basement of the Hatch home has been fitted up as a play room, with a ping pong table and facilities for backgammon, chess, checkers, and bridge. A popper and abundant corn for popping are also available. Mr. Hatch reports that Joe DeComais, the canine guardian of the Hatch estate, is beginning to tolerate history majors, so that the welcome there is now unanimous. (*Pelican* 4/29/32)

Dr. Wittmer's European Outlook course met at his home Thursday night. (*Montclarion* 3/27/42)

A typical French dinner was held at the home of Germaine Cressey, assistant professor of French, on Tuesday evening, August 4. The dinner was given and prepared by the members of the senior French grammar class. (*Montclarion* 8/14/42)

Roy W. Hatch, head of the department of social studies, recently entertained the senior social studies majors at his home on Highland Avenue. Following the tradition set during the years Mr. Hatch has been teaching at MSTC, every senior social studies class is entertained at the Hatch home. Each freshman class looks forward to this occasion as soon as it is initiated into the mysteries of the department, and all three years of college life are pursued with this goal in mind. (*Montclarion* 6/9/43)

Remember when Dr. K. O. Smith invited the gang to his home and treated us swell? And the fun we had when we went bowling with Dr. Reed and Dr. Smith? (*Montclarion* 8/11/43)

Like the academic division, the social side of campus life is divided into formal and informal systems. The formal system comprises structured extracurricular activities, including on-campus employment, and the informal includes nonofficial groups. Although both are significant for integration, Tinto found that the formal social system was more important than the informal for African American students (1993 74).

In 1903 Ernest Everett Just, one of the first black students to attend Dartmouth, found "social prejudice" on campus and decided not to pursue extracurricular activities that would have interested him had it been a more hospitable environment (Wilson 87). At the Montclair State Normal School, African Americans could and did participate in some of the formal activities such as athletics, but they were not members of the sororities. According to her daughter, Naomi Williams '18 was not welcome in certain social groups, but it was not a problem inasmuch as she did not (and could not) live on campus and therefore had her social life at home.¹⁹² Florence found the same situation 10

¹⁹² Telephone conversation on 1/23/00 with Louise Baxter Fields.

years later and reacted in the same way—without resentment. As she said in another context: “You know how the wind is blowing, so you go with it.”

William McClendon, a student at historically black Morehouse College who won the NAACP essay contest in 1934, described what he believed was the typical experience of blacks in white colleges at that time. In his view, extracurricular activities such as drama clubs and literary guilds were open to black students on white campuses only if they accepted limited and stereotypical roles. For example, they could act as a “Negro servant or an Arab” in a play or write stories on “Negro dialect.” Furthermore, he believed the behavior of white students toward African Americans was “polite, too polite, but they never thaw.” Even worse, association with other black students was lessened because white colleges were “tearing down the attitude of friendliness between the Negro students.” He concluded that a black graduate of a white college “is not prepared for life among his people or among any people . . . he is a tragic, haunted, incapable misfit” (Wilson 90).

Only one of his points seems to have been true at Montclair State Teachers College. In the college years, African Americans were welcome in all extracurricular activities and worked in campus offices, as described in detail in Chapter V. Many interviewees were involved in numerous official extracurricular activities. Sixteen people had high involvement (defined as six or more activities), seven were mid-range (three to five), and five were low (zero to two). As expected—given the fact that most extracurricular activities took place when classes ended in the mid-afternoon and many students needed to catch public transportation back home—there is some correlation between involvement and commuter status. All of those with low involvement and half of those with intermediate involvement were commuters. On the other hand, half of the high-involvement group also were commuters.

As McClendon noted, some groups at Montclair did set limits on student involvement. These included honor societies and Greek social organizations in which membership was by grade point average and/or election, but not necessarily by race. Montclair's oldest fraternity, Senate (founded in 1928), was sponsored for many years by Dr. Bohn—the professor cited most often by subjects when asked to name faculty members. (It may be recalled that Thelma A remembered being invited by Dr. Bohn to a meeting at his home, where she would feel comfortable because the family had a black maid. It is possible that she misunderstood him because the professor's daughter asserted the family never had any maid.) The 1941 yearbook notes that Senate met at Dr. Bohn's home monthly. Each Senator was responsible for giving a talk on the theme selected for that year: "racial contributions to American life" (29). Yet the first black member appears to be Frederic Martin, who did not graduate until 1957. Reuben '59 was the only other known African American Senator during the years of this study. The second oldest fraternity, Agora, was founded in 1929, a year after Senate (30). Agora sought men of "sociability, high ideals, and personality" and at least five African Americans were members during the years under study, beginning in the mid-1940s.

But in Players, the drama club, there were definite racial limitations. As noted in the previous chapter, several black students who wanted to act were offered parts only as stereotypical servants and menial workers, as indicated by McClendon. The exception was Reuben, who played the leading role of Emperor Jones—a part written specifically for a black actor (and it had already showcased the talents of Paul Robeson on film). The aspiring African American student actors seem to have been encouraged to participate in the club as much as they wished off stage. They were disappointed not to have more prominent theatrical opportunities, but they did not *blame* the college. "It was the time," said Bernice.

In the case of election to an organization on the basis of grades or other criteria, it is difficult to prove racism. One white subject who graduated with honors in English, for example, was not elected to that discipline's honor society and attributed it to "politicking" by certain students. Therefore, it is not altogether surprising that a black student whose academic standing was not quite so high would be left out as well. On the other hand, many African Americans did belong to such honor societies as well as to social fraternities and sororities. George '49 seemed to be the first black member of a Greek social organization. In the 1950s, five other subjects became members and leaders of different Greek groups (Patricia and Howard '56, Roberta '57, Reuben and Jeannette '59).

In athletics at Montclair, there appeared to be an unusually close bond among all team members, as described in Chapter V. McClendon, the NAACP essay contest winner, created a hypothetical black student at a white college who, among other indignities, was the "lone athlete" and could not become captain of the football team because of his race (Wilson 90). At Montclair, one subject suspected racial bias in the fact that Tom—the near Olympian—was not made captain of the college track team. However, two white members of the same team recalled that because the track squads were small, there was no apparent need for a captain and thus none was ever selected. Only sports in which captains had specific duties to perform (basketball, baseball, and football) had such positions. In fact, his two teammates asserted that "there was never any bias expressed either on the playing field or off it toward Tom or any of the other

black students.”¹⁹³ A review of the yearbooks confirms that there were no track captains in the years immediately before or after Tom’s time at Montclair.

Although there was no formal ethnic organization at Montclair State Teachers College—resulting from lack of critical mass, lack of need, lack of initiative, or some combination—such groups had been established on other campuses. When Montclair was still a normal school and the Ku Klux Klan was active in the Northeast, the Nile Club was organized at Harvard as

one of the many institutions formed by assertive, race-conscious blacks in the first quarter of the twentieth century in the face of the virulent, wide-spread hatred of blacks among whites throughout the country. The Club was organized to bring together Negro students on the racist Harvard campus to stimulate interest in black affairs by entertaining the views of outstanding black thinkers and doers. (Sollors 190-191).

These included Marcus Garvey, W. E. B. DuBois, and William S. Braithwaite.

At Montclair, a step was taken toward ethnic awareness through the Intercultural Relations Group that was formed in 1945 under the guidance of Dr. Link. Its purpose was “to promote a better concept of democracy by analysis and explanation of the characteristics and problems of America’s various ethnic groups.” Several black students were members of the IRG and Marilyn was an officer. The student president said:

We are hoping that our group will be a worthwhile meeting place for all students at Montclair who are interested in learning more about the traditions, culture and problems of the various groups which constitute the melting pot of our country. We want to learn, and through learning, to understand. From this understanding we hope will grow a better and deeper concept of democracy. (*Montclarion* 2/16/45)

At one of its first meetings, the group discussed “problems of world minorities” and the speaker was a Harlem minister (*Montclarion* 5/11/45). The following year, the group had

¹⁹³ From a personal letter to me from James McGilvray ’49 dated 9/29/97.

a guided tour of Harlem to gain “a clearer picture of life and its problems there” (*Montclarion* 2/21/46).

On the informal side, social activities included small circles of friends, impromptu outings by resident students, and off-campus activities such as the Alpha Kappa Alpha sorority. Nettles believed that white students experienced greater academic integration and black students had relatively high social integration (27). The African American students in this study were at Montclair long before Nettles came to his conclusion, which may account for the difference. My subjects were unanimous in rating their academic experiences highly, whereas there was much more diversity in their opinions on the social life.

In the 1980s, Mel Watkins encountered an uncomfortable situation at Colgate University, where the reluctance of most white students to socialize with him often was masked by polite and false friendliness in the place of true friendship (Watkins 24-26). Although they were not equally enthusiastic about the social conditions at Montclair, neither did black subjects express the coldness described by Watkins or, similarly, by McClendon in the 1930s. Even the three people who mentioned some feeling of distance from white students did not seem to find the environment as hostile as did Watkins or McClendon. Frances found her white College High School classmates to be friendly “as long as it was school-related.” Gerry thought she had a best friend in her major department until that person “dropped me like a hot potato” upon joining a social group, and Gerry was not close to other white students. Katherine said, “I had my own social life, so I wasn’t interested in any of the social activities. . . . I didn’t bother attending the meetings of some of the social clubs that they had.”

Lillian, a resident student, felt very much a part of the informal dormitory community. Following our interview, she visited one of the two Hawaiian students who

were in her class and residence hall. They talked about the issue of racism during the 1950s at Montclair, and the Hawaiian woman said her perceptions of campus life were similar to Lillian's—that is, she felt welcome and described a kind of “cocoon” environment. She had more opportunity than most students did to experience campus life in its entirety because she did not go home for four years. Audrey (white), a resident, also said: “I think we were kind of in a cocoon.” Astin found that living on campus is especially helpful in socially integrating black students who enter college full time immediately following high school (1982 152, 183). That appears to have been true for the resident subjects in this study.

Several researchers have demonstrated that if integration into only one of the two systems—academic or social—is strong enough, it may compensate for the absence of involvement in the other. At Harvard in the late 1890s, W. E. B. DuBois distanced himself from the unwelcoming formal social life and focused on his academic life. He acknowledged that his relations with most Harvard professors “were pleasant. They were on the whole glad to receive a serious student, to whom extracurricular activities were not of paramount importance, and one who in a general way knew what he wanted” (Sollors 76). At the Trenton State Normal School, a student who arrived in 1919 had less than ideal social integration but “in the classroom we seemed to be accepted. I didn't feel any difference in the classroom. Teachers seemed to treat us all right and call on us” (Devore 223).

Ethel B went one step farther by rejecting even the concept of academic integration. When asked about her feelings of acceptance in the classroom (formal integration), she said:

I didn't pay too much attention to whether I was accepted or not accepted because my professors, they were so on target as to what they were doing that I couldn't sit around, you know, and figure out what's going on and what people

were thinking or anything. . . . It never entered my mind whether I was being accepted or not accepted. I was there to do a job and that was it.

Later in the interview, when questioned about her feelings of acceptance in the social life of the college, her response was consistent.

See, again, that word “acceptance” rings a negative with me because then it says, well, were you not accepted because you were black or were you accepted because you were black? And I say, “Well, why do I have to be accepted because I’m black or I’m not black?” As I said before, there was never an issue of being accepted or not accepted. It was what I wanted to do, and since I didn’t want to participate in the social life of the college, it was never an issue. You know, if I wanted to, I don’t know if I would have been rejected.

All students had the option of working and playing together in the formal social environment on campus, but it was a different story off campus. Usually those experiences were with same-race friends. Even after the students became full-time teachers, said Alma, African Americans probably socialized more with each other in the schools and at home. “But also they socialized and mingled with others. I would say that it’s just the wise thing to do. It’s not a good idea to isolate and segregate.”

As noted in Chapter I, playwright Lofton Mitchell (77) wrote bitterly that sadism seemed to be a prerequisite for white teachers of black children in the public schools of the 1920s and 1930s. “These teachers knew nothing and cared little about Negroes and wondered why they had to put up with them. Since neither teacher nor pupil had been exposed to Negro history, the black child sat in class, unwanted, barely tolerated.” McClendon painted a similar picture of white colleges in the 1930s having a “wall of indifference, neglect, and subtle ignoring which crushes the spirit of a [black] student and which burns into his soul.” In his view, a white college was no different from society at large in segregating and isolating African Americans, disdaining their abilities and limiting their mobility. They helped to confirm W. E. B. DuBois’ popular and prophetic

pronouncement that “the problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the color line” (Wilson 90).

Although the subjects in this study experienced racism off campus, and a minority of them encountered incidents at the college as well, the general campus life at Montclair State Teachers College appears to have been an exception to the view stated above. Interviewees remembered more isolation in hometowns and in other noncampus environments than they did on the campus. Even the participant who professed that a racial incident in his high school was laughable and soon forgotten recalled it in painful detail after more than 50 years had elapsed. Yes, the social landscape was marred by racism and indeed the “color line” would be a top contender for DuBois’ dubious distinction as the “problem of the twentieth century.” But at Montclair State Teachers College, most black students were integrated, at least to a minimum level of acceptance, into both the academic and social communities.

The direct focus of this section has been on integration into the academic and social campus systems, but consideration also must be given to the *racial* integration of black students into a predominantly white culture. During the years under study, the concept of racial integration was either ignored or taken for granted by most subjects. Those who ignored the issue said, reflecting from the present, that people simply did not think in terms of black and white. Subjects of both races asserted this opinion in different contexts throughout the interviews.

If an oxymoron may be permitted, such assertions constitute sincere disingenuousness. I have no doubt of the sincerity of those who made the statements, and to a great extent they were correct. Students of both races *did* participate jointly and extensively in the life of the campus, both academically and socially. Simultaneously, they were all aware of the fact that African Americans could not—depending on the

year—join social sororities (and therefore created their own, such as Alpha Kappa Alpha), live on campus, openly date a Caucasian, have a lead in the play, etc. Students were quite conscious of individual “racial trees,” but did not paint them onto their mental landscapes of the “social forest” as a whole.

Vernell looked back to the pre-World War II years and expressed the sentiment of young people like herself in these terms: “We were highly political, but we thought it was a better world, we’d have a better world.” The global upheaval was expected to usher in an age of reasoned peace. Following the war, that hope was sustained. Juanita said: “The races were trying to get along together. . . . We were not polarized; we were friends.”

But peace remained elusive. By the late 1950s, Jeannette’s desire to establish a campus chapter of the NAACP was viewed as divisive by worried white students as well as by African Americans. Would people think something was *wrong* at MSTC? As shown by the comments of interviewees, many were oblivious to any real or imagined problems and saw no need for such a group. In later years, institutions rather than students often were the instigators of separate ethnic “centers” designed to deal with discontent by isolating or marginalizing it. Most of my subjects saw themselves as a unified group, all working toward the same noble goal of teaching the nation’s young. They would have rejected the notion that they needed a special support group. Quite to the contrary, they regarded themselves as full members of the existing community.

The attempt to create a chapter of the NAACP represented a challenge from within. The Student Government Association rejected the NAACP. But, like a persistent growth, the concern of some blacks for their visibility sprang up in a different form as the unofficial Black Organization for Success in Society. Within a decade or so, BOSS was a formal component of the campus social structure. Vernell looked back from the present

and said that when the “black power movement came, it . . . was jolting, because we thought that we were living together and we were liking everybody and we were . . . opening doors and closing bad doors.” She had not foreseen the need for such a racially based group at the pre-1960s MSTC. Integration was taken for granted; differentiation was not an objective.

The 1960s shattered all illusions, sincere or just insensible, that race was not an issue for students at the teachers college. Ethnic enclaves sprang up on campuses throughout the country. But that is another story. This one ends with the observation made by Roberta: “Aside from simmering racial discontent waiting to explode a decade later, the world was quiet.”

Persistence/Retention

Tinto paraphrased the extensive work of Ernest Pascarella and Patrick Terenzini and their colleagues by noting that “voluntary withdrawal is much more a reflection of what occurs on campus after entry than it is of what has taken place before entry” (1993 56). Nevertheless, in his model of retention, Tinto recognized the critical effect on persistence in college of pre-entry attributes such as early education, other childhood experiences, and initial goals and commitments. The early miseducation of many African American children has a cumulative effect that often is revealed in college (Nettles 78).

The poor quality of early education leaves the unsuspecting student underprepared for higher education, where academic failure may come as a bitter surprise to a person accustomed to being at the top of the class. A review of the comments of interviewees about their early education confirms the views of Nettles and Tinto, at least with regard to academic preparation. They were not asked specifically to describe the quality of their secondary education, but rather to talk about high school experiences.

Academically, they generally had excellent precollege educations. Some were outspoken in their appreciation for the quality of their preparation. Vernell said her all-female high school was a “really first-rate place.” Ethel M “loved high school academically.” Alma said the schools in her hometown were excellent. Joyce, Lillian, Marilyn, Ethel B, and Norma were proud of the academic standing they achieved in high school. Reuben believed he had competed successfully in the intellectual arena.

But success was not handed to them. African Americans were unusual in many college preparatory programs. Marie (white) reported no blacks among the top-tier classes at Montclair High School. Some subjects, including George and Juanita, were alone or nearly so. Yet they and the others persevered and excelled, thanks in part to their own determination, in part to the attention of special teachers, and in part to the encouragement of their families.

A recent study by Clifford Adelman, senior research analyst with the United States Department of Education, showed the importance of courses taken in high school to college admission and completion. For all students, taking a mathematics course beyond the level of Algebra II doubled their chances to graduate from college. Among African Americans who went at least one step beyond Algebra II and took advanced placement courses, 72% who enrolled in college earned a bachelor’s degree (Adelman 27). Black high school pupils who were excluded from the opportunity to take such courses during the period under study probably had a much lower chance of even being admitted to a college like Montclair.

The fact of their admission to Montclair testifies to the adequacy of the preparation of those who did enroll. Class rank alone would not have been sufficient, as has been demonstrated; the valedictorian in an inferior school may have been less prepared than a mediocre student in a good school. But when class rank was combined

with their scores on the state college entrance examination, accepted students were assured of their academic readiness to tackle the rigors of the college classroom without need for remedial work. In this regard, they differed from many contemporary black students who are admitted to college on the basis of their potential despite poor academic preparation. "The educational experience for the majority of African Americans is not equal to that of middle-class America. Remedial education is partially an accommodation to this reality," wrote John B. Duff, president of Columbia College in Chicago (32).

For the Montclair students during the years under study, their acceptance automatically gave them equal intellectual standing in the eyes of both their peers and their professors. As Audrey (white) said, "We were here really because we could be here. . . . We had all been accustomed to being, you know, near the top of our classes." No one commented negatively about the quality of his or her early academic preparation. The few black students at MSTC were all well qualified for higher education in terms of the standard admission criteria.

The recent research of Thomas and Tinto showed that black and white students had approximately equal rates of completion if their abilities and backgrounds were comparable. (Thomas found a slightly higher rate for blacks and Tinto found just the opposite.) The equality of academic preparation of Montclair students was established above. A review of the interviewees' family backgrounds reveals that the only two parents who graduated from college were the two physicians. Seven others had completed normal or nursing school or attended college for a short time. Therefore, many participants had no direct preparation from their parents concerning what to expect in college.

A check of parental employment shows that most black students were of the middle to low economic class. Even the college student whose father was a physician did not enjoy much greater economic advantage during her enrollment because the Depression had seriously limited the family's income—which is the very reason she was at Montclair rather than at a “seven sisters” school. Socially, she and the other doctor's daughter, a College High School pupil, were accustomed to living on a *higher* plane than most of their acquaintances of either race. But overall, the economic and social class backgrounds of the African Americans were probably somewhat lower than those of their white colleagues given the high representation of unskilled parental employment in work such as domestic, cook, and chauffeur. Nevertheless, the parents were gainfully employed.

A second set of factors that affects persistence in college involves the student's goals and commitments. Astin discovered that aspiring to become a teacher is related positively to persistence, and minorities who major in education perform relatively well academically (1982 106-107, 111). In the Montclair group, every subject (except the College High School pupil) expected to teach—although some saw it as a stepping stone to another career and others saw it as a career of last resort. For most, their heart's desire was to teach. Even Marilyn and Marie (white), who entered the college without an inner commitment to teaching, ultimately graduated with the intention of doing so, although one only substituted and the other taught less than a year. Others, such as Howard and Bernice, increased a lukewarm commitment during the four-year period. The success of this small sample of students from generations preceding Astin's work lends support to his later finding that aspiring to teach is related positively to persistence. Of course, not everyone who enrolled actually graduated, and data are not available to ascertain the strength of the dropouts' determination to teach.

Tinto found that desire to graduate from a particular institution enhances the likelihood of persistence (1987 45). Most subjects wanted specifically to graduate from Montclair for various reasons that included its reputation, secondary curriculum, and location. If they were not successful at Montclair, they had no other options that would afford all of those advantages.

Support from significant others is instrumental as well (Page and Page 8-9, K. Cross 128, Astin 1982 184). The majority of interviewees had the support and encouragement of their teachers and families, with the usual exceptions to the rule. There had been “no college talk” in Gerry’s family; she was not particularly committed to teaching; and she felt little support on the campus either. In spite of all the negatives, she persisted and pursued a satisfying career in teaching and counseling. As noted earlier, Gerry finally found her niche in Alpha Kappa Alpha. Without that personal acceptance, it is possible she would not have continued her studies.

Patricia was taunted by a boyfriend who predicted she would not graduate. A guidance counselor told Ethel B that since Montclair was one of the best schools in the nation, she would not be accepted. Both were determined to prove the naysayers wrong, and both had encouragement from other quarters in addition to their inner ambition to teach. Overall, participants in this study were supported and encouraged by their families and friends, despite the fact that the majority of parents had never attended college and many friends had entered the world of work directly from high school.

The inability to finance an education might be decisive even if all other indicators are positive. Financially, all subjects were able to get through college, usually with a combination of means. It is not known whether a lack of funding contributed to the departure of any of the eight known African Americans who dropped out. If so, it

was not part of the official record and was not known to the interviewees who were their acquaintances on campus.

Finally, the location of an institution can make a difference in persistence. A 1982 study showed that

Blacks attending colleges in the Northeast get higher grades, are less likely to drop out, and are more likely to be satisfied with the undergraduate experience than Blacks attending institutions in the other regions. A variety of explanations for these relationships are possible. It may be, for example, that the colleges in the Northeast are more sophisticated and progressive in dealing with the special needs of Black students because of the high concentration of Blacks in that region of the country and the liberal tradition of the Northeast in the area of civil rights. (Astin 1982 105).

Montclair is located in a county with a large African American population and a town with a history of liberal and sophisticated racial views relative to other areas in a given era. Therefore, Astin's point is probably valid with regard to the geographical situation of the college and, thus, the general culture of the surrounding society. However, it does not appear that any "special needs" were addressed for black students, except by individual discerning professors.

As noted in the previous section, Chickering's first "law" is that student development occurs in cycles of integration and differentiation (316). Although students do need to integrate into some aspect of college life—the formal and informal academic or the formal and informal social, and preferably all four subsystems—they also need to establish separate identities. The African Americans in this study did not proceed en masse from freshman to senior year following in each other's footsteps. They selected their majors and joined organizations based on personal interests and abilities. They supported one another socially, but seemed to find equal support from white friends, especially within their majors. They showed independence and initiative from the start by their willingness to venture forth into a predominantly white college. And their

initiative was rewarded with an excellent academic education, an acceptable and sometimes outstanding social experience, and the preparation to enter a fulfilling career.

The major factors that facilitate persistence, as identified by several researchers, are the quality of pre-entry attributes (characteristics of family and early education), congruence with the institutional goals and focus on a professional objective (teaching), commitment to a particular institution, high involvement and acceptance (integration and no isolation), the support of significant others, and adequate finances. My subjects, in the aggregate, followed this pattern of success. Yet each person painted a few variations onto the pattern. The strength of each factor in contributing to an individual's decision or ability to persist is highly dependent upon his or her own perceptions (Attinasi, Murguía, Tinto, Chickering).

One of two students faced with similar circumstances might feel isolated whereas the other does not. One might consider a certain professor the best ever encountered whereas the other finds him a racist. One might drop out because finances are low whereas the other applies for welfare assistance and continues in school. One might feel unwelcome in a campus organization and remain uninvolved whereas the other finds a different group to join. As Chickering asserted in his second "law" of student development, the impact of an experience depends upon the characteristics of the person encountering it.

A final consideration in a discussion of persistence involves the subjects' persistence in finding and keeping teaching positions. Every one of them who wanted to teach ultimately did so, and some went on to other work in education. The combination of factors cited above with regard to retention in college is equally applicable to persistence in a career.

Changes in the Status of African Americans

African Americans were in subordinate positions relative to the general society in the 1920s. Black doctors were restrained from practicing their profession in “white” hospitals. Public schooling was often segregated and inferior. Students were excluded from some colleges or their residence halls. Limited education kept most African Americans out of prestigious jobs, and even those with simply adequate pay. Children learned to keep their distance from peers of a different race. Actors could play only stereotypical parts. Citizens were turned away from public and private recreational facilities. Travel accommodations were segregated in the South.

Each of these inequalities had changed dramatically by the 1950s, the end point of this study. Those changes resulted from new laws, federal programs, glacial movement in public sentiment, and World War II. The NAACP and other civil rights groups were instrumental in the fight for legal equality. Their efforts in the courts led to increased dignity and victories in access to—and quality of—education, health care, recreation, and transportation. The Depression forced federal assistance to all the nation’s citizens. Military service forced attention to the absurdity of segregated troops fighting for democracy overseas. And public sentiment finally was awakened to the irrational continuation of habits that were pointless in the modern age.

All of these factors were important in the larger world in which the subjects of this study lived, and the changes were positive. As Florence said, “I faced what my children didn’t face. My older sisters and brothers faced what I didn’t have to face as far as this business of people and their race is concerned.” They came from homes that had been hurt by systemic racism, forcing their families into menial positions both economically and socially. They would go out into a world that held on to racist

practices, albeit with a weakening grip. But the focus of this study was on their experiences at Montclair State Teachers College.

It has been shown in the preceding pages that black graduates of the normal school and the early years of the teachers college were obliged to teach in the segregated schools of New Jersey or out of state. The testimony of others confirms this reality. Octavia Warren Catlett '22 would say in those days: "Don't talk about Mississippi and Alabama. Talk about Asbury Park. Talk about Princeton, and talk about Montclair" (Gresh 1). She did take a position at a black elementary school in Princeton for \$100 a month. "It was just like being down in Mississippi. But it was the only place I could get a job then." One of Devore's interviewees who graduated from the Newark Normal School some time prior to 1930 said:

Job opportunities were mostly in black schools. It was unusual for a black to teach in a white school—except in Elizabeth or Jersey City, but then they didn't have too many there. . . . The girls that graduated with me in normal school had to go to south Jersey to get jobs; both of them got in Camden 'cause that was separate.

But she could not immediately obtain a teaching position herself and did domestic work instead, eventually becoming a teacher in south Jersey (Devore 42, 229). On the high school level, it was even worse. Beatrice Harvey, the first black student at Upsala College not far from Montclair, graduated in 1929. Her first job was at a private black high school in Virginia because nothing was offered in New Jersey.¹⁹⁴

New Jersey required its state-educated teachers to promise they would teach within the state for two (later, three) years following graduation. None of the seven subjects who were students during the time the pledge was in effect remembered signing

¹⁹⁴ Telephone conversation on 5/23/99. She earned a master's degree from MSTC in 1942.

the document and only Marie (white) recalled even seeing the statement in the catalog. Devore's three black subjects who graduated from the Trenton State Normal School in the early 1920s did remember signing the pledge (231).

We signed an agreement that we should teach in New Jersey two years after you graduated. Well, since I couldn't get a job in New Jersey I went to Maryland but when they send for you to come back to New Jersey you're supposed to come. . . . So they sent for me to come back that same fall. . . . It was a black school.

The other two African American graduates from Trenton also went out of state—one to Maryland and the other to Virginia—because they had no offers in New Jersey, even in the black schools. It is tempting to speculate that state authorities discreetly declined to notice when African American students failed to fulfill the promise, knowing it was impossible for many of them to do so. As noted by Davis (74), it is also possible that the Depression and the teacher glut during much of the period led even state bureaucrats to the sensible realization that attempting to enforce the unenforceable would be folly.

In addition to limitations in career openings, the normal school students were excluded, probably by convention, from the campus social sororities. However, they were members of the Greek honorary societies that acknowledged academic achievement. In athletics, they appeared to be full participants on official teams and in recreational sports. But social dictates kept them from playing lead parts in theatrical productions, a condition that continued throughout the years of this study.

A review of historical cinema shows how “movies betray the accepted version of the past as a clue to the beliefs and preconceptions of the time at which they were made” (O'Connor 51). The same can be said of the stage. Because “the Negro must appear as a buffoon or a servant,” as Frazier wrote, “all of these cultural influences tend to instill racial prejudices in the young and confirm the stereotypes of the Negro in the minds of

adults” (669). Franklin observed that World War II brought improvement in theatrical chances along with other opportunities (375-376).

The war, with all its attendant horrors, nevertheless was instrumental in edging the country toward the fulfillment of President Roosevelt’s “four freedoms”—freedom of speech and worship, and freedom from want and fear—not only in Europe, but for blacks in the United States as well. An editorial in the student newspaper, the *Montclarion* (4/13/43), proclaimed:

There is no complete assimilation of the existing races and religions to be seen in our lifetime. We must live side by side; let us live in mutual friendliness and understanding. . . . Let us eliminate that outworn word, tolerance, from our way of thinking. Let us not *tolerate* but *understand*.

At Montclair State Teachers College, one of the most significant changes—probably war-related—was the admission of African Americans to the residence halls. Equalization of living and working arrangements in the military, both in defense work and on the fighting front, opened the doors at home to integrated living. Moe, a white veteran, said: “You know, after World War II we were much more relaxed. I’m talking about at least the veterans. We had served alongside of black units.” Physical integration led to social integration in the dormitories, complementing the existing equality in the classrooms.

In 1944, Myrdal explored the sociological principle that ideologies continue after the conditions that gave rise to them no longer exist. As an example, he pointed out that the economic basis of slavery in the cotton fields led to disrespect for African Americans that continued long after massive human labor ceased to be economically required. In an address to the NAACP in 1971, William Hastie, the first black American federal judge, echoed Myrdal’s point.

Many believed that the 1960s would see black America and much of white America, freed of racist laws, united in a climactic drive to eliminate from our

society racist practices, behavior and patterns of thinking and living which still persisted after they were no longer required or encouraged by law. (Sollors 264)

A quarter of a century had made a difference, but there was still a long way to go. Montclair students revealed their own versions of the principle identified by Myrdal and Hastie. Florence noted that in the 1920s “you didn’t ask the black girls for anything like that” (joining sororities). In subsequent years, when African Americans could participate freely in such activities, a habit of creating their separate amusements persisted although it was no longer needed. Thelma C said: “I guess they wondered why we probably didn’t participate more. . . . I think we were doing other things.” And Jeannette observed that “all the invitations were open,” but

generally blacks did what they wanted to do and whites did what they wanted to do. . . . If you wanted to go, you could go. Chances are you probably wouldn’t particularly want to go, particularly if the dancing was different. . . . But I don’t think it was thought of, “I can’t go” or “I won’t go.” It’s just that we’d have something else to do.

Bernice and her black friends in the residence halls acknowledged being fully accepted. She even thought the white students were “fascinated” by the African Americans because the races had never interacted closely at home. Nevertheless, force of habit led the black students to straighten their hair during times when the white students were out of the dormitory and “fan the stuff out the window” to hide their activity. This surreptitiousness was instilled in Bernice by her mother, who was very concerned about image in the eyes of Caucasians and would say, “Oh, Bernice, *white* ladies!” Bernice explained, “My mother was born in 1898, in the South, so ‘white ladies’ in quotes, you know.” Later, Bernice learned to discontinue that useless habit. When a white friend visited her at home,

my mother said to me, “You’re not going to press your hair in front of her, are you?” And I said, “Unless she leaves the room!” [*laughter*] Isn’t that interesting? And I can see us fanning this stuff out the window. Is that a riot? . . . It didn’t have to be hidden. . . . But that’s the way we came up.

Reuben arrived at Montclair with this advice from his mother ringing in his ears: “Don’t you go up there messing with those white people!” He had every right to be on campus. He was admitted and expected to participate in academic and social activities. But his mother’s generation was rooted in the very recent past, when “messing around” and lack of deference could lead to serious and even life-threatening consequences.

Race was not an overt issue at the college, but it was addressed in specific courses such as “Racial Contributions to American Life” and highlighted in various contexts by the student newspaper throughout the three decades of this study. Nevertheless, most subjects did not believe it was a matter of serious discussion, except possibly by students who congregated in the “Rec Room.” For example, the *Montclarion*’s “roving reporter” asked students their opinions on the Little Rock situation in the late 1950s. But Jeannette, who was acutely aware of that particular problem as well as others, did not recall that students talked about it. She almost single-handedly tried to interest her peers in racial issues by establishing the NAACP chapter, but met with resistance from whites and apathy from blacks.

The African Americans were not disinterested in racial progress, but they were not commonly inclined toward a confrontational approach. Their actions on campus changed as the racial climate off campus changed. Florence, in the 1920s, saw inequity but accepted it. Katherine, in the 1930s, did not accept her exclusion from the residence hall; she endured some hostility, but followed through with her resolve to live on campus. George, in the 1940s, joined a fraternity that hitherto had been exclusively white. Bernice, in the 1950s, “stomped in” to demand from her professor an explanation of differential treatment. These students and their colleagues were not mere recipients of

the college's offerings. They had an impact on the changes at Montclair, just as they would later influence conditions in the schools where they taught.

The changes at Montclair State Teachers College sometimes mirrored and sometimes foreshadowed those in the larger society, and the subjects of this study understood many of their own feelings and actions in light of the times in which they occurred. Jeannette knew that college experiences could not be interpreted with the knowledge of the present and all that occurred in the interim. What seemed obvious at the time of the interview was not at all so in their college days. Some ideas, she said, are "kind of modern."

Conclusion

Is racism really racism if the "victim" does not consider it such? Yes—just as rubella is still rubella, whether or not the victim realizes he is infected. At Montclair *at the time* they were students, African Americans did not usually consider themselves the victims of racism. That is, they did not see rampant acts of oppression against them *as* individuals or a group *by* individuals or the institution. Although several subjects cited one or two incidents that made them wonder or feel angry or hurt, they still would not label the college as racist.

Limitations on enrollment and residence life are two clear indicators of institutional racism, which lessened at Montclair during the three decades. There is no concrete evidence that the normal school or the college ever promoted racist policies, but black enrollment was low throughout the period due to societal racism that kept African Americans underprepared for admission. The lack of adequate preparation may have been due to poor schooling (untrained teachers, deficient facilities, lack of supplies) and/or to the cultural assumption that African Americans would not go to college, which

steered them away from college preparatory programs in high school. For either reason or a combination, their insufficient secondary coursework and consequent inability to pass the state college entrance examination effectively barred many students from acceptance into Montclair State Normal School or Teachers College. African Americans who were well prepared, however, seem to have been admitted without regard to their number or their county of origin.

But an institution cannot control its individual members. In light of the time, the faculty were given extraordinary professional freedom. They also were involved with admission decisions for the departments. It is conceivable that individual professorial prejudice prevented some African Americans from becoming students at Montclair if the faculty member's objections were couched in academic terms that were plausible to the rest of the admissions team.

The second major indicator of institutional racism is residence life. There is little doubt that until 1946 (except one semester in 1933), black students did not live on the Montclair campus—or on the Trenton campus or, presumably, at any of the state teachers colleges. One of Devore's interviewees went to Trenton in 1919 and found "that the colored girls had a different place to live than the white girls" (223). But the reason for their nonresidence is not clear. Montclair students simply "knew" that African Americans had to commute, board locally, or lodge at the town's black YWCA. Did they know this because it was so taken for granted in the culture of the time that they never considered applying for residence? Did they apply and meet with rejection? Bernice said: "I don't know whether it's just that they just said 'no' you couldn't or whether somebody tried and couldn't, or this was a policy—I don't know. I really don't know." In any case, the fact of their nonresidence resulted from institutional racism as defined by

present standards. If they simply did not apply, the racist institution would be society at large. If they applied and were rejected, it would be the college itself.

What we do know is that in 1931, after “day-hopping” for two years, the fair-complexioned Katherine applied to live on campus. She was put on a waiting list due to space limitations (as were many white students) and accommodated during the interim in a college-sanctioned house off campus. One of the other young women in the house committed an aggressive act of individual racism, and the housemother defended Katherine’s rights. When a space became available on campus in 1933 after Katherine returned from study abroad, she was placed in a single room (at her request).

Unbeknownst to Katherine, the dean of women allegedly summoned all other residents to inform them of the arrival of an African American. The integration process was uneven, but Katherine had “happy days” in the dormitory for one semester before returning home to practice teach.

Thirteen years passed before another black student lived on campus. Without hearing her account of events, it is not possible to portray them accurately. The reports of others point to a problem with her immediate arrival that seemed to stem from the societal sensibilities of the staff rather than the students. But the door had been opened, and other African Americans walked through into a comfortable place among white residents. Not one black student could think of a single racial incident within the residence halls. On the contrary, they felt welcomed and very much a part of campus life—more so than most commuters of either race.

Interviewees made numerous comments to the effect that during their years at Montclair State Teachers College they did not think in racial terms, that they went along with how “the wind was blowing,” that they simply did not see racism, and so on. There is no reason to suspect they were fabricating this feeling. If anything, it seems they

would have a tendency to look back with their present knowledge and do just the opposite—that is, interpret incidents as racist when they did not seem so at the time they occurred. In fact, the two “test subjects” who graduated in 1959, just following the period under study, did make such statements. Reuben said: “Now when I think back as a truly mature adult and having had lots of experiences in lots of places, . . . that was a racist community that I was in at that time.” And Jeannette wondered:

Behind the scenes and in the teachers’ lounge or whatever, they probably had us labeled. You know, the good ones who would cater to them, they probably loved. The rest of us who weren’t looking for any special attention probably didn’t get it. But it was just a kind of a different time.

The earlier participants, I believe, truly did not think they were living in a racist community on campus. They and their white peers were convinced that there was good will all around—because *they* felt such good will.

Even so, it would not be fair to conclude that the African American students were passive victims who did not realize they were being wronged by the majority society, if not by individuals they knew and trusted. It may have appeared to others and to themselves that they were simply a part of the existing campus picture. They were “the same as everybody else,” as Bernice said—the same Bernice who laughed in later years about how the black women hid their hair-straightening from white roommates. In fact, they had developed a subtle subculture while continuing to join in the activities of the majority campus culture. They did notice details in their daily lives that were troublesome, and they worked to correct those indignities to the best of their awareness and ability—but within the context of their positions as ordinary Montclair students.

An analogy can be made with the student drama organization called Players. Students of both races wished to take lead roles, but society dictated that African Americans play only the parts specifically written for their race. Some refused; some

agreed; some worked behind the scenes instead. They made personal decisions that suited their individual natures and goals. They became the actors in their own life dramas rather than assuming the audience role in someone else's performance. Sometimes they were applauded and sometimes the theater manager stopped the show, but they persisted both on stage and behind the scenes in shaping the "play" to their liking. And the white students, faculty, and administrators of good will took part in their productions and promoted them to the outside world, where they starred on the stages of their own classrooms and encouraged new performers of both races to reach for their own stars.

Perhaps *because* these African American teachers were successful, their black charges in the schoolroom grew up with the confidence that they, too, could succeed in a white world. Even George, who at first had trouble with his black students but not the whites, won their respect and had a most satisfying career. The white charges of the black teachers likewise had a chance to develop respect for African Americans in authority. Moe related the following story about George:

When he got to be a teacher, he was not just a good teacher; he was probably one of the best. . . . He ended up teaching in my hometown. . . . One of my neighbors said to me—because I was active in school board affairs; I was on many of their committees—"You know, my son has a black teacher and I'm upset about that." And I said, "What's his name?" And she said, "Mr. Harriston." And I looked at her and I said, "Mary, your son John is probably the luckiest kid alive because George is not just the best teacher in the school; he's probably the best teacher in the state." About three or four months later, she met me at a party and she said, "You know, Johnny thinks that Mr. Harriston is absolutely wonderful. You were right!" But she was upset because he was black; and where she came from, black was unusual.

In concert with the massive changes inculcated by the civil rights movement, the next generations of black high school graduates had much more opportunity to pursue other lines of professional work and had every expectation of doing so. This interpretation corroborates the judgment of numerous researchers with regard to the lessening attraction of a teaching career for young African Americans. My research has

confirmed earlier works and, perhaps more importantly, provided the opportunity for individual voices to be heard.

As expected, the use of oral history uncovered information about certain aspects of campus life that was not available elsewhere. However, its primary value was to provide a forum for the self-interpretation of a significant season in the educational history of the United States. The 28 interviewees lived an experience and structured their own memories into a coherent life narrative. Following our interview and a luncheon held for all participants, Frances wrote: “No one in the educational community has ever asked me about my experiences and circumstances. You have shed light on a very significant aspect of the black experience.”

The African American graduates of MSTC proved the truth of predictions made by Myrdal, Franklin, Frazier, and other major researchers—that higher education would have an enormous effect on reducing the “ever-raging conflict” of the American dilemma involving black citizens. With access to college educations, they obtained better positions than those held by their parents. They taught in integrated schools and demonstrated to generations of children that African Americans are capable and worthy of respect.

This study has revealed the interaction and negotiation among students and between students and the college. The college provided opportunities and some obstacles. The students made their views known and could take credit for fostering changes—both in the student culture and in the administration of the institution.

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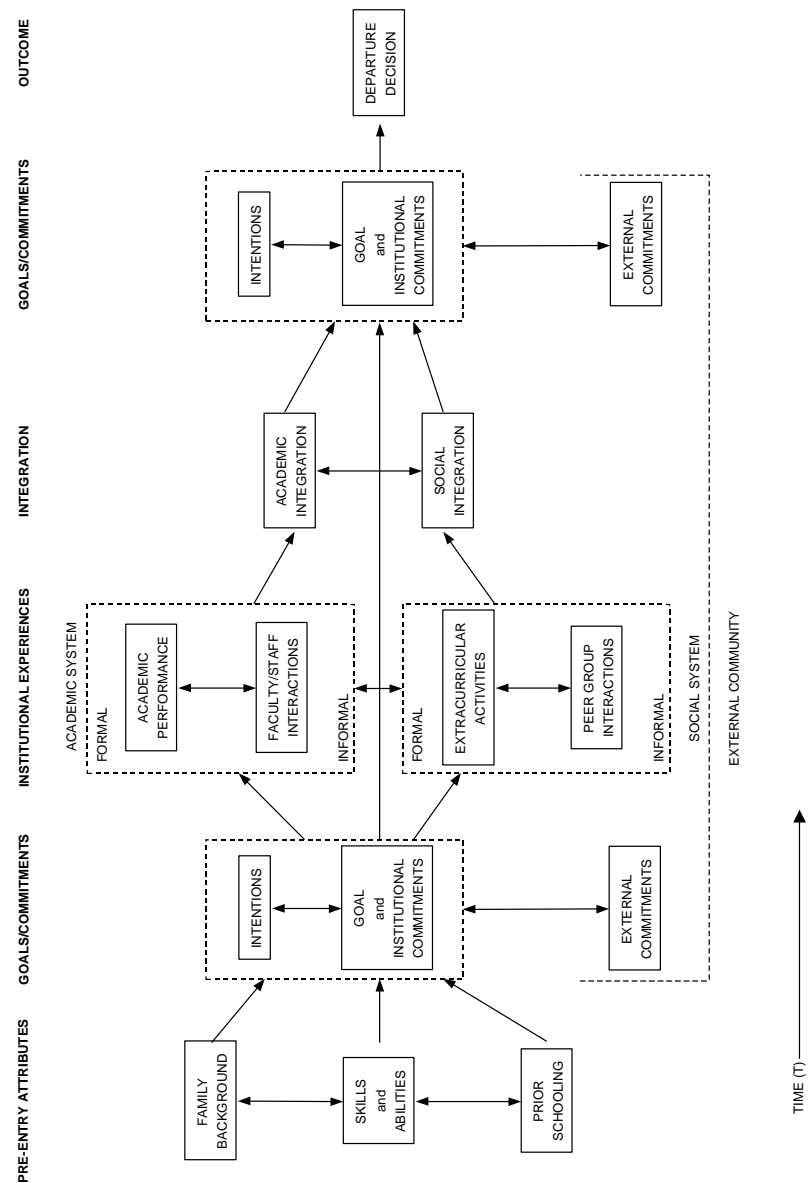
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APPENDIX A

FIGURE
TINTO'S MODEL OF STUDENT DEPARTURE

Tinto, Vincent. *Leaving College: Rethinking the Causes and Cures of Student Attrition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993, page 114.



APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM

TO: Lise Greene, Office of the President, Montclair State University,
Upper Montclair, NJ 07043 (973-655-4213)

I, _____, agree to be interviewed for Lise Greene's research, which is being conducted for a dissertation at New York University, School of Education, Department of Administration, Leadership and Technology. I understand that the research is intended to study the experiences of African American students in the teacher education program at Montclair State University from 1926 through 1954 [later changed to 1927 through 1957]. I understand further that the interview is expected to take between one and two hours. Specifically, I agree to the following:

- ☐ I will be video- and audiotaped at a location of my choosing.
- ☐ I will be audiotaped only at a location of my choosing.
- ☐ I will give to Montclair State University the video- and/or audiotaped interview(s) recorded with me as an unrestricted gift for such scholarly and educational uses as it may determine, and transfer to the University legal title and all literary property rights including copyright.
- ☐ The video- and/or audiotape(s) may be filed in the University library and/or archives and be accessible to future researchers.
- ☐ I would like to have a copy of the video- and/or audiotape(s).
- ☐ My name, photograph(s), and comments may be used for the dissertation.
- ☐ My comments only may be used for the dissertation.

(Consent form - continued)

I retain the right to withdraw from this project at any time with no repercussions, and to review all or any portion of the tape(s) and to request that they be destroyed, if I so desire. This agreement may be revised or amended by mutual consent of the interviewer and myself.

[Interviewee's Name]

Lise Greene

Street

Date

City, State, Zip

Date

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

This is [date] and we are [location] . [Interviewee] has agreed to record his/her experiences in the teacher education program as part of an oral history of teacher certification of African Americans at Montclair State University. My name is Lise Greene. I am a doctoral student at New York University and Executive Assistant to the President at MSU.

A. Outcome

1. Let's begin by having you state your full name, for the record [including maiden name if different].
2. In what years did you begin and end your studies at Montclair State?
3. [For those who graduated:] What degree did you earn, and in what major and minor?
4. Did you begin teaching? How soon after graduation did you start your first teaching position, and where was it? What were the races of your students and fellow teachers?
5. What was your career path [following that first teaching job]?
6. What other degrees did you earn?

B. Goals and commitments (I)

1. Please tell me why you decided to become a teacher.
2. What were your thoughts about a career when you were finishing high school?
3. Please tell me about anyone who inspired you to become a teacher. [What were the races of these individuals?]
4. To what other colleges did you consider applying? Why did you decide to attend Montclair State?
5. How much was tuition? How did you finance your education?

6. While you were attending college, what other commitments or responsibilities did you have at home or at a job? [If you had a job, was it on or off campus and how many hours did you work each week?]

C. Institutional experiences

1. Please describe a typical day on campus.
2. Can you tell me about your academic experiences? For example:
 - a. Did you attend Montclair State full or part time?
 - b. How did you perform academically? How do you think your performance compared with that of others?
 - c. Can you recall how you felt about your classroom experiences at the time you were a student? [comfort level, acceptance, etc.]
 - d. Does it seem to you that these are the actual feelings you had during college, or an interpretation of your feelings, looking back all those years?
 - e. Please tell me about faculty or other staff members that you particularly remember.
 - f. Did students discuss important social issues of the day either inside or outside the classroom?
 - g. How much did students in your class interact with faculty and staff outside the classroom? Were African Americans included?
 - h. Where did you do your practice teaching? What were the races of your students and cooperating teacher?
3. Let's discuss the social life on campus.
 - a. What involvement did you have in extracurricular activities such as clubs, sports, dances, church services, fraternities/sororities, or campus committees?
 - b. Did these activities include students of all races, or only certain groups?
 - c. How many African American students were on campus when you were there? Did you know all of them?
 - d. Where did you live while attending Montclair State?
 - e. How welcome did [you and other] minority students feel in the residence halls?

- f. How would you characterize your relationships with other students in activities outside the classroom?
- g. Did you date while you were a student? [Did you date other students? Where did you first meet each other? etc.]
- h. What local restaurants or places of entertainment did you go to?
- i. Can you give me examples of any racist incidents you or others encountered on or around the campus?

D. Integration

- 1. How much opportunity was there for you, in general, to be a full participant in your classes?
- 2. How much acceptance did you feel in the social life of the college?
- 3. Was there any sense that you belonged to a community or family on campus? In what specific ways did it seem so?
- 4. What assistance were you given in finding a teaching position?

E. Goals and commitments (II)

- 1. If you changed your intention to become a teacher at any time during your studies at Montclair State, what led you to change your mind?
- 2. Did you consider attending or actually attend other colleges, either before or after being at Montclair?
- 3. Please tell me how your commitments to external responsibilities (if any) changed during your years at Montclair.
- 4. If you knew black students who started but did not finish the program at Montclair, can you remember why they left?

F. Pre-entry attributes

- 1. To backtrack a bit, could you tell me a little about your family background before coming to Montclair State? For example, did you live with both of your parents, and were there others living in the house?
- 2. What employment did your parents hold?
- 3. What was the highest level of education attained by each of your parents? [If neither parent attended college: Please tell me about someone in your family or school who gave you a sense of what it would be like to attend college—what the culture would be like, how to behave, what others would expect of you, how an

average day would be structured, etc. How did you feel when you first stepped onto campus?]

4. Where did you go to high school? What was the racial composition of your high school in terms of both students and teachers?
5. Can you tell me what you saw as your best talents and interests in high school?
6. Who encouraged you to attend college?

G. Summary

1. How much of your perceptions of campus life at Montclair do you think was shared by [other] black students, in general?
2. What were the high and low points of your years in college?
3. What are the most important changes that occurred during your years at Montclair?
4. How much contact have you maintained with Montclair State since you graduated? How about with your classmates?
5. What grade would you assign to the education you received at Montclair State?
6. What grade would you give your nonacademic experiences at Montclair?
7. Would you choose teaching as a career if you could start over, if you knew then what you know now?
8. Please tell me about any other [factors that helped you to finish college, or about any other] aspect of your life [as an African American student] at Montclair State that you would like to share with others.

H. Unstructured recollections

APPENDIX D
PHOTOGRAPHS OF INTERVIEWEES



Jeannette Allen (Williams)



Thelma Anderson (Courtney)



Joyce Ashley



Katherine Bell (Banks)



Marilyn Blackburn (Harris)



Ethel Blake (Sykes)



Gwendolyn Boyce



Patricia Brown (White)



Roberta Brown (Thaxton)



Thelma Clark (Spence)



E. Alma Flagg



J. Thomas Flagg



*Marie Frazee (Baldassarre)



*Irwin Gawley



George Harriston



Juanita High



Florence Holcombe (Hampton)



Reuben Johnson



Bernice Mallory (Smith)



Vernell McCarroll (Oliver)



*Morris McGee



Ethel Miller (Henderson)



Lillian Pettigrew (Morson)



Matthew Pinkman



Geraldine Riley (Doswell)



Norma Thompson (Richardson-Dade)



Frances Thornhill (Morris)



*Audrey Vincentz (Leef)



Howard White

*white

APPENDIX E
BLACK GRADUATES THROUGH 1957
(INCOMPLETE)

1912

Mary Lee Moten

1918

Flora Findlay
Nannie Holcombe (Davis)
Edith Moten (Fitzgerald)
Rosemary Pearman (Stevenson)
Emily Naomi Williams (Baxter)

1919

Carolyn Laws
Ethel Van de Vere (Nelson)

1920

Adelka Chase (died just prior to
graduation)
Amaza Morris (Lockett)
Idabelle Yeiser

1922

Ruth Green (Jordan)
Nellie Morrow (Parker)
Octavia Warren (Catlett)

1923

Mary Henry (Anthony)

1926

Marie Ryerss

1927

Sadie Alma Bushell (Morse)

1928

Florence Holcombe (Hampton)
Mary Womble (Spruel)

1933

Norma Thompson (Richardson-Dade)

1934

Katherine Bell (Banks)
Medora Young (Hill)

1935

Ruth Earley (Dunne)

1936

Jessie Scott (Campbell)

1938

Rhea Brown (Ashe)

1940

J. Thomas Flagg
Ralph Jones

1942

Ruth Hoppin (Rand)

523

1943

Vernell McCarroll (Oliver)

1944

Thelma Anderson (Courtney)

1945

Lottie Lane (Anderson)

1946

Marilyn Blackburn (Harris)
Margaret Callen (Gough)
Theresa David

1948

Randall Carter
Ethel Miller (Henderson)
Nellie Pryor (Ware)

1949

Luther Harrington Jr.
George Harriston
Lois Johnson (Blake-Redman)
Herman Sommers
Betty Jane Thurston (Gore)

1950

Ophelia Bland (Allison)
Audrey Johnson (Favors)
Anne Talmadge (Chisholm)

1951

Gloria Vaughan Curry
Juanita High

COLLEGE HIGH SCHOOL –
1952

Frances Thornhill (Morris)

1952

J. Duval Anderson
Nina Hall
Edward Height Jr.
Dorothy Mayner
George White Jr.

1953

Gwendolyn Boyce
Thelma Clark (Spence)
Bernice Mallory (Smith)
James Mosselle
Geraldine Riley (Doswell)
Mildred Constance Williams

1954

Julia Reba Lassiter (Randall)
Kenneth Pettigrew
Matthew Pinkman III

1955

Dorothy Atherley
Samuel Cameron
Barbara Hughes (Wilson)
Mary Reid

1956

Joyce Ashley
Frances Baker
Patricia Brown (White)
Noah Marshall Jr.
Hugh Watson
Howard White Jr.

1957

Ethel Blake (Sykes)
Roberta Brown (Thaxton)
James Carter
Frederic Martin Jr.
Lillian Pettigrew (Morson)
Barbara Plater (Greene)
Houston Robinson